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Egyptian Civil Society (Transnational vs. Local): The Distinction Between Theory and Practice

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Egyptian Civil Society (Transnational vs. Local): The Distinction Between Theory and Practice

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Cairo, Egypt
University of San Francisco
December 2012

Masters of Arts in International Studies

Egyptian Civil Society (Transnational vs. Local): The Distinction Between Theory and Practice

Masters of Arts

In

International Studies

By

Jeremiah Davis

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Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

Advisor

Date

Academic Director

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Dean of Arts and Sciences

Date

Abstract:

The strength and dominance of political society, rather than the weaknesses of civil society, is arguably one of the primary reasons for massive civil uprising in Egypt led by independent, unaffiliated members of society. In many cases it appears that civil society was behind the Egyptian Revolution, although is this the case? Did the Revolution happen in spite of civil society? Just as the state can be a roadblock to development and democratization, civil society may also be detrimental to society's growth. In this thesis, the development and civil society community is analyzed to discover the functions of CSOs as well as their own opinions on civil society in the hope of gaining a more precise and practical understanding of civil society's role throughout Egypt. This thesis considers the major forces of civil society, both externally and internally, to include: local NGOs, international NGOs, USAID, development contractors, transnational organizations, and youth members of the resistance movement known throughout this research as "activists."

Development agencies and foreign governments fund civil society in order to promote democratization and empower actors outside of the state. However there is a lack of understanding of what civil society is in the developing context rather than how it is understood in Western academia and policy. In the developing context civil society is often not simply a grassroots sector, as is often suggested, and rather an intricate network of transnational organizations funded by foreign governments or WB and IMF, while local organizations or NGOs are highly regulated by national government. Essentially these formal civil society organizations are unable to challenge state dominance due to the fact that they either work closely with them or are working on the goals of Western global structures. What the investigative research found is that there is a dynamic, grassroots, and voluntary group of unaffiliated members of society although they're not considered to be civil society by national or foreign governments, and therefore do not receive funding or assistance like formal civil society. This research and thesis is vital to the understanding of what civil society is in Egypt and the re-conceptualization of civil society in the developing world.

Key Words

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

CSO: Civil Society Organization

MB: Muslim Brotherhood

Ikhwan: Muslim Brothers

WB: World Bank

IMF: International Monetary Fund

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

The Street: Grass root agents for change

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	6
1 Preface: Midan Tahrir (Liberation Square).....	7-14
2 Introduction: What is Civil Society in Egypt?.....	14-19
3 A Historical Overview: The Modern Egypt.....	20-26
4 Literature Review: From Gramsci to Ferguson.....	26-57
5 Research Methodology.....	57-73
6 Analysis: Not what it seems.....	74-126
7 Post-Revolution Egyptian Political Cartoons.....	127-131
8 A Conclusive Discussion: “Informal” vs. “Formal” Civil Society.....	132-140
Appendix I: Legal Analysis of NGO Law 84, 2002.....	141-143
Bibliography.....	144-146

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To Midan Tahrir and Beyond

The Twittiverse on #Jan25:

@SandMonkey: Shower, Cargo pants, Hoodie, running shoes, phone charged, cash, ID, cigs (for jail) and some mace just in case. Am ready! #Jan25

@adamakary: #jan25 protester's demands: increase in minimum wage, dismissal of interior ministry, removal of emergency law, shorten presidential term

@Sarahngb: Tahrir square looks scary. Cordons, policemen, fire trucks, CS trucks. #Jan25

@tarekshalaby: Today's our day as #CitizenJournalists to cover and share the truth freely. Regardless of the outcome we are winners cuz we're a team #jan25

@monasosh: I know this will sound corny, but I have never felt like this is my country more than now #jan25

@Ghonim: We got brutally beaten up by police people @Jan25

@ashrafkhalil: #Jan25 crowd chanting 'salmeya' peaceful

@RamyYaacoub: RT @Sarahngb: Thousands of People still at tahrir square chanting 'al sha3b yoreed esqat el nizam' 'the people want the system down'

@Ghonim: Egypt after #Jan25 is no way going to be the same as Egypt before it. Today we proved so many points.

It was the 1st of February 2011 in the late evening. Wearing a *galabeya*, a traditional white robe, I awaited anxiously, sitting on my back porch in San Francisco, California. Having just arrived from Cairo two days before the first day of the uprising, I was already considering my next flight back. I figured that the final semester of university could wait. Glued to my laptop, staring at the ensuing events, I tried to stay in close contact with friends and family. Personally, this was a bittersweet time; I felt that I needed to be there on multiple fronts, particularly for my family's safety as well as to join the movement. My family had never cared for military rule or the Mubarak regime but had become disenchanted, or jaded, over time and had no intention of flying me in for

“another flattened protest.” Keeping in close contact is what allowed me to mentally or spiritually take part, spread awareness in the U.S. (where almost everyone was beyond confused), and take part in the growing international protests in solidarity with the people of the so called Arab Spring. I was not present in Cairo during the initial eighteen days of the uprising, however, I was in the capital for the one-year anniversary as well as spent several months in Cairo throughout the year of 2012. As a consequence, I only have the personal accounts of close friends and family members that took part in the eighteen-day uprising.

As I begin to recall, it was the early morning of February 1st, 2011 in Cairo, Egypt. The passing month was imprinted onto the minds of every Egyptian as if it were yesterday. Exhausted from many sleepless nights, we were weary of a security apparatus of which we feared our entire lives. Buzzing from a constant nerve-racking excitement that was going on outside our apartments, there was a tension thick enough that it could have been sliced with a knife. Fearful of the next twenty minutes (let alone what the future had in store) there was nonetheless also a feeling of pride, a feeling of accomplishment beyond what any student, manual laborer, banker, engineer, or unemployed person has ever felt before. This feeling was not related to personal deeds that only you or your immediate family could reap the benefits; this was instead a feeling of energetic waves circulating through millions of people with the hope of accomplishing something greater than their immediate circle and beyond themselves, something that could (and will) alter the course of Egyptian history. This same energy awoke the restless youth, many wondering if they could keep this momentum going for at least one more day.

At the beginning of each day, it has become typical for the daily mode of thinking to become more serious as people spend time sifting through social media and news (local and international). Using Facebook and/or Twitter, the situation is analyzed: Who was there? What were protesters seeing and hearing? (It was the “go-to” primary news source). Of course, a week after the beginning of the uprising, the government blocked social media outlets forcing media users (even the average technologically-capable individuals) to take advantage of proxy Facebook and Twitter sites. Other thoughts included: How are we going to get to Tahrir? What is security like? Where will everyone meet? How will we get home? (And of course, the question on many people’s minds particularly for the majority who did not spend their nights guarding the square) What in God’s name am I going to wear? This question may sound irrelevant, but it was just as important as any other. In other words, what do you wear to protect yourself from police-baton beatings and massive over-crowding or from tear gas and rubber bullets? These were practical thoughts by the practical revolutionary when considering all the possibilities of “What can happen today?” and “How can we come out alive in order to sustain this growing movement?”

In Cairo, Tahrir Square is the place to be. It is a central-blood conduit for reaching Cairo’s city center, downtown, Mohandeseen, Zamalek, Heliopolis, Maadi, Shubra, and other areas. Diverse crowds battle from every neighborhood to break police barriers while wiggling themselves through narrow roads that barely have enough space for a 1980 Fiat, let alone the infamous police “box” truck. Tahrir works as the destination for every group march or massive protest, not simply because the square is coincidentally named *liberation* square in English, but because it is a public space and therefore it can

hold mass crowds coming in from every surrounding neighborhood; it effects traffic because it is located near luxurious hotels and the Cairo Museum (for example) that makes it easy to disturb much of the city's flow of transportation and tourism; and because the Square symbolizes the heart of Cairo where crowds offer protection for the resting revolutionaries who had occupied the square and established a tent city. Tahrir has now become a microcosm of Egypt, albeit a bohemia, but still a fair representation of Egypt's urban youth as well as older generations of men and women.

At this point (February 1st) in the Square, receiving cell phone signals and/or communication was nearly impossible. Upon arrival to Tahrir one would find civilian checkpoints (for safety reasons and to ensure the peaceful attitude of the protests) surrounding the general area and specifically guarding the entrances and exits around the square. Along with civilian security came many welcoming people tempting those on the outskirts to join and be a part of what was happening. Separate lines were formed for men and women that worked toward ensuring a safe experience for all. Anyone who has lived or visited Egypt will know how rare ordered lines are, for any establishment. The people in Tahrir are trying to make a point or send a message not just about how non-violent protesting should be conducted, but also how a crowd of thousands can be well-organized and civilized, unlike the wild, adrenaline junkie, anarchists the state media had portrayed them as. Although checkpoints can be seen as threatening, particularly for this police state, in reality civilian checkpoints are not nearly as threatening because everyone is on the same "side;" guards even made a point to be kind and courteous during each pat down.

Once going passed the checkpoint, your imagination was opened to the unexpected. Everything looked unfamiliar and unrecognizable to the point that, if it were not for the well known surrounding sites of the Cairo Museum and KFC (for example), you would hardly recognize where you were or be able to orient yourself. The square was packed, beyond anything resembling a fair or carnival. Public space was occupied. The main square of downtown, normally an orientalist dream or at least a tourist's favorite open space amidst the bustling crowded city, was now out of service for its conventional duties, it felt as if you just passed through an entirely different city in order to get to Tahrir Square. Yet, it was not the site itself that was jaw dropping, but in fact it was the people. The crowds of people were actively and composed of mostly young individuals but all with different backgrounds (conservative and progressive, secular and religious); it did not matter. All that mattered was that people cooperated with one another in order to achieve what had been seen as an impossible feat in the past.

Somehow individuals knew how to organize for this movement. People had no problems giving orders as much as taking orders. The surrounding space was so clean you may have thought you were in Tahrir Square in 1927. Within the Square, *midan*, there were hospital tents, tents for sleeping, tents for making posters, with people of different ethnicities around them. Venders (no officially recognizable until several weeks later) sold flags, protester paraphernalia (for example, gas masks for the purpose of protection from tear gas) food, and water. In some cases food and water were simply handed out for free to anyone who was thirsty or hungry. There was a real sense of camaraderie, no matter what your religion, sex, or age was and that is something Egyptians had never felt on a mass scale before (beyond his or her own neighborhood). It

is as if our generation had awoken from a three-decade slumber ready to build a future, ready to take the situation into their own hands, ready to reclaim their individual and collective rights, and ready to make the mark on society that they had yet to make. As soon as one person managed to lock eyes with someone else, there was an exchanged gesture that signaled a need for help with a chore such as cleaning up trash if handed a trash bag or delivering medical supplies to tents or simply to hoist a flag or poster if given.

Furthermore, there were sounds of chanting and loud yells in a rhythmic chorus coming from open mouths of ordinary, modest people. Women, who are rarely allowed to show their dissatisfaction with their traditional gender role created by the state, were seen leading chants and putting their hearts and souls into their words. Men, denying their traditional roles, were seen leading but also, going against the expectation of men's roles in society, were following chants, taking the back seat to other leaders, and for once allowing women to play the integral role that they are normally limited to in a highly-patriarchal society. Moreover, Muslims and Christians were raised together garnering Bibles and Qurans to demonstrate the community's cohesiveness and togetherness. The crowds, similar to what was seen in Tunisia, often yelled "we are one hand," "down with the regime," and "down with military rule" while in between the hallmark chants came witty, creative, rhyming phrases that displayed Egypt's world renowned sense of humor. Smiles and sadness, chants and conversation, everyone had their personal reasons for being present at the protest, yet the underlying force was to take back their country, together.

Recalling further, I pushed my way through the crowds as a feeling of claustrophobia came over me while the faces of different walks of life passed. Approaching the epicenter of the Square, I squeezed behind the tea vendor (who was excitedly yelling in Arabic, “Tea, Tea, have a cup for Egypt”) to climb a ledge and improve my vantage point. With just a few more feet of elevation I was able to better differentiate who was who within this microcosm of Egypt. Whether it were young, urban, middle-class men chanting creative cheers in rhymes or a group of women, half-veiled half-not, calling for their equal rights within the new constitution or bearded men congregating on a colorful stage with loud speakers promoting the Islamist political agenda, one key conclusion was obvious: No one knew what they were doing. For almost all who were in attendance, the past year was the first time for many Egyptians to bask in the fight for the human right of freedom and of political speech.

Fast-forwarding to the summer of 2012 (September to be precise) Egypt had a democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi. Not coincidentally, he is the Muslim Brotherhood’s (MB) candidate from the Freedom and Justice party. The MB, (banned for decades up until this Revolution) played a solid, yet dominantly active role in the uprising, making sure their presence was felt in Tahrir Square and elsewhere. It just so happens now that their candidate is our current President (something I had mulled about and was initially confused about when they were passing around political pins throughout Tahrir months before even a decision to have an election). The foundation of Tahrir, its cohesiveness, is barely intact and I cannot help but wonder if this was the result of its politicization. I keep asking myself, were the Egyptians in Tahrir Square and in other city centers of Egypt playing the role of civil society? Or did the Square become

a place to enhance political agendas? If the Square has changed over time, how and why did it happen and can we actually call it civil society? And really, what is civil society in Egypt? What are these social and political dynamics of Egyptian civil society that allows our society to be confused and unaware of who is with whom? And so, I went back to Cairo, in search of these difficult answers, interested to know what kind of role major forces of civil society were playing in the uprising, and whether they are the same people who were in the Square just a year earlier lining up side by side, with arms ringed together, and in unison chanting: “Down with the military dictatorship.”

Introduction

Egypt has, and always will be, the subject of a variety of interpretations of history, politics, and culture. This is especially the case considering that Egyptian society is seven-millennia old and is at the crossroads of the African and Asian continent. Whether one ponders about the construction of the great Pyramids of Giza or the many stories surrounding the three Abrahamic faiths, Egypt has reserved its place in the history of human development. As an Egyptian American, this country is my home because it is where I was born and where I lived until I was eighteen. I was raised with ancient Christian and Islamic Egyptian histories since childhood. Of course, I never fully realized the geo-political significance of my home and I certainly never grew up looking at the country through an anthropologic lens. Arguably, I still do not. Yet there I was, January 25th 2011, nearly finished with my undergraduate degree, not knowing I would be recalling this memory for my master’s thesis, and I was watching what would quickly

become the Egyptian Revolution on my laptop from the sunny porch of a shared apartment in San Francisco.

My initial reaction quickly discredited the relevance of civil resistance and protest, putting it down to an increasingly lower standard of living for most Egyptians. From the millennium to 2010, the decade was marked by a flurry of protests that called for increased individual rights but were quickly squashed. A few days later, the movement grew, and the majority of people gathered in Tahrir (liberation) Square were protesting against President Hosni Mubarak and his cabinet, which had held on to power for thirty years. To witness the socio-political eruption through the Western news stations, yet to be far away and to hear the chanting through my computer the whole situation was surreal on a number of levels. In my gut, it felt impossible that *the* President Mubarak, who has been hailed as the Pharaoh, the Father, the great leader who has “provided” peace with Israel, would allow himself to be seen as an enemy of the people. Yet for all of this, the calls for protest were not that surprising on many levels: Egypt had been in a political and economic downturn for a decade while it implemented neo-liberal policies that caused the quality of life for a majority of Egyptians to decrease.

One year later, after a thousand Egyptian deaths, even more injuries, supposed sectarian violence, state sponsored violence, the ousting of Hosni Mubarak along with the National Democratic Party (the one party that has ruled Egypt), and the state continues to be in disarray. I found myself attending the one-year anniversary of the Revolution in the epicenter of Cairo, Tahrir Square. Nearly one million strong in the country’s capital and the Revolution felt all but finished. The choking smell of teargas was not there to torment civilians. The images of police and military were non-existent. The passionate,

revolutionary spirit felt fresh, almost as if I had never left for the U.S. to study the year prior to the outbreak.

While some individuals and groups treated the day as a time to celebrate, many felt that the trials and tribulations of Egyptian citizens were beginning to seem like a lost cause, as if the Revolution had not been realized. Besides the ousting of Mubarak and members of his authoritarian regime, they were quite correct, much had gone unchanged. Pushing my way through the crowds, and feeling claustrophobic, the faces of many different walks of life passed. Approaching the epicenter of the Square I squeezed behind the tea vendor, who was excitedly yelling in Arabic, “Tea, Tea, have a cup for Egypt.” I climbed a ledge to improve my vantage point. With just a few more feet of elevation I was able to better differentiate who was who within the microcosm of Egypt that was Tahrir Square. Whether it were young, urban, middle class kids chanting creative cheers in rhymes or a group of women, half veiled half not, calling for their equal rights within the new constitution or bearded men congregating on a colorful stage with loud speakers promoting the Islamist political agenda, one key conclusion was obvious: No one knew what they were doing. For almost all who were in attendance, the past year was the first time for many Egyptians to bask in the human right of freedom of political speech. Yet, with the new in coming freshness of political freedom came skepticism that took time for most Egyptians to accustom themselves.

Watching, listening, and joining with individuals and groups conversing, sharing active dialogue, enthusiastically conveying frustration on their faces and hands, it was clear that most shared similar general inquiries that friends, family, and I had on our minds: Who will lead Egypt next? What does the future hold? How will the country be

governed with a bloated bureaucracy; high unemployment; and without strong institutions, government, civil society and other key factors of a fully functioning state? The Egyptian military that runs a significant portion of the economy is known as the government's armed wing; it quickly took the role of leader and stabilizer in order to oversee the transitional and election period that approached in the summer of 2012 and now is in charge of the state. For a country that was once considered by global financial institutions to be semi-stable, on the rise, and with a GDP growth rate of up to six and seven percent in the last decade, the conditions of the state are unnerving, if not bleak. The basis of this research is to determine what kind of state Egypt is, post-revolution, and what societal forces have a stake in filling the power vacuum left behind by the former thirty-year president in order to ultimately decipher what and who compose Egyptian civil society.

The key elements of this puzzle require an unraveling of the relationship between the state, political society, and civil society. First this means analyzing what "the state" is both theoretically and practically. For Egypt, understanding the state is a complex task. The distinguishing lines between political and civil society are unclear as certain social forces play a dual role. In the Egyptian case, political society is made up of the military, the government led by the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Freedom and Justice Party, the state's security forces, and a plethora of newly founded or revitalized political parties yearning for a seat, or representation, in the recently elected parliament. The most relevant force within political society, besides the military, is the newly de-legalized, extremely organized, Islamic based political party: the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or the *Ikhwan*. The state, in this case, is a tool for cultural and political coercion

used by the ruling party, known up until now as the military and the newly elected government dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. Civil society in Western academic literature cites civil society as a democratic, grassroots sector of the nation-state, providing Western governments the inspiration for writing policy that supports civil society organizations (CSOs) in developing nations. Still, is this definition misconstrued or misinterpreted, when civil society in Egypt does not appear in the same light? In order to achieve cultural and political dominance, civil society can also be used as a tool for cultural and political coercion. The strength and dominance of political society, rather than the weaknesses of civil society, are seen as primary reasons for massive civil uprising led by independent, non-affiliated members of society. Just as the state can be a roadblock to development and democratization, however, civil society forces may also be detrimental to society's growth. In this thesis, the development and civil society community is analyzed to discover the functions of CSOs as well as their own opinions on civil society in the hope of gaining a more precise and practical understanding of civil society's role throughout Egypt. The claim made in this thesis considers the major forces of civil society, both externally and internally, to include: local NGOs, international NGOs, USAID, development contractors, transnational organizations, and youth members of the resistance movement known throughout this research as the "activists."

After investigative research, it has been determined that the needs, functions, and dynamics of the major forces (or social groups) make up the state of Egypt. It is, I argue, especially important to understand who the agents of power are in this tumultuous time, particularly within the context of this movement against the former regime. Are civil society organizations (CSOs) the groups that organized the Revolution or did the

Revolution occur in spite of civil society? The purpose of the Revolution was not only to alter the status quo, but also to recreate, reestablish, and remodel the plan for Egypt's growth as a developed state and society. Under Mubarak, there was no such plan. While it may have appeared this way on paper, with Egypt receiving the second highest amount of U.S. foreign aid, the country functioned under a patronage system that cared for the interests of those in power. While civil society is meant to challenge this system, CSOs have functioned under the dictatorship and many arguably are either not capable or are not interested in applying pressure on government. This research and thesis is vital to the understanding of what civil society is in Egypt in an attempt to distinguish between the various social forces of the state, and whether they actually conduct the work of civil society in principle.

The plan of this thesis is as follows: First a historical overview and backdrop of contemporary Egypt leading up to the beginning of the Revolution will be provided. The literature review will magnify the varying interpretations of the *state*, its function, and what it is should be projected as in the case of Egypt. Second, the root and many meanings of *civil society* will be put in to context in order to better conceptualize its role in Egypt's society in reality. Following, the methodology will include an outline of the description of sample subjects, access to subjects, the recruitment procedure, the subject consent process, the positives and limitations of my research, as well as the potential risks and benefits to research subjects. The following sections will analyze the primary research and political cartoons from post-Revolution, followed by the discussion chapter. I will present the research and interview results completed during my stay in Egypt while the discussion will be utilized for delving into the research more deeply.

Historical Overview of Contemporary Egypt

The nation-state of Egypt, also known as the Arab Republic of Egypt, is located in northeastern Africa and is home to the largest population in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Being a transcontinental nation¹ Egypt, in the modern world, had been as a leader of political, economic, and social movements throughout the region. With a vast historical background, ancient languages and religions, it is particularly interesting- and puzzling as to why Egypt has in the last three decades followed a downward spiral of political, economic, and social erosion. With the great pyramids and pharaohs in Egypt's rearview mirror, the once prosperous nation is now at a crucial fork in the road in 2012. Just this past year, January 2011, Egypt underwent a revolution that attempted to throw out the ruling party and president, Hosni Mubarak, after nearly thirty years of "almost democratic" authoritarian rule. Beginning with a brief history of how the state of Egypt has come to be, this section will attempt to outline the logic in which the leading party, the military, The National Democratic Party (NDP), and its president, has controlled the political, social and economic spheres of life throughout the country in order to keep itself at the forefront of power.

Egypt in the Modern world

Before the modern world and birth of the Republic of Egypt the region became home to many notable colonizers, giving way to the Greek, Roman, Arab, Ottoman, French and British empires. Egypt's relationship with the international community had

¹ Egypt geographically resides both on the northeastern corner of the African continental shelf and the Asian continent.

always been one of dependence until the early 20th century². Following the First World War, Saad Zaghlul and the Wafd party led the first Egyptian nationalist movement of their modern history in an attempt to revolt against the British Empire. Though the British government issued a unilateral declaration of Egypt's independence in 1922, the replacement kingdom under King Farouk would rule for decades of autocratic and neocolonial rule. Britain's continued military involvement along with the King Farouk's constant involvement in the parliament led to a 1952 coup d'état or military revolution, depending on whom you speak to. What some consider to be a revolution can also be understood as a bloodless coup led by the Free Officers Movement led by the top youth military leaders: Muhammad Naguib, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and Anwar El Sadat. This change in power would open the doorway to an Egyptian led Egypt for the first time in thousands of years, a period of modern Egyptian history mired with extreme highs and lows, and a newly politicized military junta leadership that has ruled Egypt to this day.

General Muhammed Naguib became the first president of Egypt while also

² Egypt's historical character has many faces due to their extensive colonial background. Egypt has failed to be ruled by its own people dating back to Ancient Egypt. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, imperial powers in Egypt consisted of British, French, Ottoman, Arab, Roman, and Greek/Macedonian rulers. Under the Ptolemaic and Roman era Egypt was utilized as an agricultural breadbasket for the Mediterranean powers. Throughout the middle ages, and as a result of the spread of Islam, various Arab rulers ruled Egypt particularly the Fatimid and Mamluk empires. The early modern era gave way to Ottoman and French rule who were keen on controlling Eastern trade routes. Ottoman rule lasted from 1517 to 1882 though the French occupied Egypt for a short time. The region acted as an important Ottoman governorate though on several attempts were made to become autonomous. The French Emperor, Napoleon, interrupted Ottoman rule by propagating himself and his empire to be a liberator of Egypt from the Ottomans although his primary goals were to disrupt British trade routes, to control the Mediterranean, and build a canal in Suez to connect the east and west (Mediterranean and Red Seas) sea trade. British rule lasted from 1882 until 1936 when the last of Britain's military presence was expelled, though advisors were kept in the government until Egypt's 1952 military revolution.

declaring Egypt a republic in 1952. These leaders implemented land reform that would attempt to spread wealth to the citizens who were kept in poverty by the colonial monarchy. Yet at the same time however, most citizens who appeared to have gained wealth throughout the period of colonization would lose much of their status in the country.

With Nasser's effort to create a more egalitarian society, much of the population became polarized, as the educated population felt that they were being punished for being educated. Only two years later, the real architect of the Free Officers Movement, Gamal Abdel Nasser and his followers would force Naguib into house arrest for his disapproval of Nasser's ideas of land reform and policy. Nasser would then become the president and nationalist figure of Egypt beginning in 1956. Nasser's presidency quickly led to the complete withdrawal of British forces from the Suez Canal zone, nationalizing the Suez Canal months later. According to Said Aburish in his work, *Nasser: The Last Arab*, Nasser's disregard for opposition political parties, and his insistence on one national movement replacing the party system, permitted him to lead many major projects with undisputed power. This move gained Nasser national prominence, becoming a symbol for independence in the Middle East, as no one questioned his leadership. This period of rule under Nasser has been championed by some and loathed by others. Following an assassination attempt on Nasser's life during his speech celebrating Britain's withdrawal, he ordered one of the largest political crackdowns in Egyptian history- arresting approximately twenty thousand people made up of Muslim Brotherhood members, Communists, Wafd party followers, and any one else who opposed Nasser's rule (Aburish: 2004: pg. 53-55). With no opposition, Nasser quickly became the undisputed

leader of Egypt. He would then lead Egypt into a long period of war with Israel becoming a regional figure of the Arab world³ for the regions independence movements against colonizers. Nasser's Egypt became heavily militarized under their close friendship with the Soviet Union, as the country became the prototypical cold war proxy state (Aburish: 2004: pg.272). Nasser's regional prominence allowed for Egypt to become the powerhouse of the Arab world. They became leaders in military strength and society as the entertainment industry boomed in Egypt's favor. Though, Nasser's last war with Israel in 1967 led to Egypt losing control of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza strip. His presidency, filled with highs and lows, took a negative turn, as he was unable to unite the Arab world under his Pan-Arab policies. Failure to oust Israel indefinitely would put Egypt in a position of weakness that they would never recover from.

Nasser's death and eventual end to his rule resulted in leadership change within the party as Anwar Sadat, a former leader of the Free Officers movement, became the next president of Egypt in 1970. Sadat played a large role in changing Egypt's cold-war alliance with the USSR to the United States, as the U.S. government was able to convince Sadat that the only super power that could create peace between Israel and Egypt was America. Sadat would continue this transformation by creating a new economic reform policy, known as *Infatih*, which opened the doors to free and open trade as well as private investment. His policies also opened the door to the development industry as USAID established their assistance program in Cairo. In 1973 Sadat led a surprise attack on

³ Pan-Arab policies focused on the unification of the Arab world and promoted Arab nationalism. The 'Nasserist' ideology, identified with socialist policies, defined pan-Arabism throughout the 1960's. Nasser attempted to create a pan-Arab state that included Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, however the union failed to organize under one leader as Nasser sought to be the leader of a unified Arab state. Pan-Arabism was especially weakened due to Israel's demoralizing victory in 1967 over the allied Arab states.

Israeli forces in order to re-occupy the Sinai Peninsula leading to heavy U.S. involvement.

Only four years later Sadat would be pushed by President Carter to make peace with Israel, following with a historic visit of the first Arab leader in the Jewish state and a final peace agreement in 1979. Sadat's peace movement received little support from the Arab world but was heavily supported by most Egyptians, as he was able to regain Sinai with some dignity. Two years later, the Muslim fundamentalists he had attempted to keep quiet throughout his rule would assassinate President Sadat. His death was then followed by the rule of the party he created, the National Democratic Party (NDP), as well as a thirty-year period of rule by his former Air Force commander, Hosni Mubarak.

Hosni Mubarak took over as the undisputed leader of an even weaker Egypt. Following the peace treaty, Egypt was kicked out of the Arab league while losing its place in Arab history as the most powerful force in the region. Mubarak's thirty year reign of presidency saw virtually no dispute with Israel, a re-recognition of Egypt in the Arab League, a continued relationship with the United States, even at the end of the cold war, a continued economic policy of free trade and private investment, and the same political government crackdown on all opposition seen under Nasser and Sadat. On paper there was extensive economic growth that failed to reach the majority of society. The two-year period prior to the Egyptian revolution in 2011 saw the worst unemployment rates under Mubarak. Endemic corruption and authoritarian governance resulted in a wealthier upper crust of society while the middle class shrunk, allowing the inevitable rise in poverty.

The logic of the state affects society in numerous ways and certainly has

destabilized civil society. Although there are over fifteen thousand non-governmental and/or civil organizations in Egypt, a number growing rapidly post-revolution, the recently passed law in 2002 (Law No. 84) greatly prohibits the freedom of these organizations. The law places great legislative restrictions on them while ultimately taking away from the spirit of being a democratic institution and being of the people. These legislative restraints are aimed at administrating/controlling the funding and NGO capabilities but have the adverse effect of stunting Egypt's social activism and civil progression. Additionally, NGO's must have government officials on their decision-making boards in order to oversee the work of the organization and its congruence with the logic of the state. The very foundation of an NGO is broken with certain restrictive laws, such as the law No. 84. NGO's are meant to be independent from any direct control of a public authority, they are often non-profit, they are not associated to a specific political party or campaign, and they are non-violent and non-criminal. Under certain articles of Law 84, the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs (MISA) actually grants influential rights and authority of the state over the operations of NGO's in Egypt – a direct infringement to their universal right to freedom of association. Article 11 in law 84 forbids the “threatening (of) national unity, violating public order or morals, or calling for discrimination between citizens because of race, origin, color, language, religion or creed.” When a country prohibits its own people's ability to speak, meet, and work collaboratively, they are devastating their own social progression and cohesion – ultimately, imprisoning the Egyptian people's rights to freedom of association and expression. The state's meddling in the affairs of civil society is a major factor behind social stagnation and how the state has controlled the social affairs of its citizens.

The historical background of modern day Egypt is a necessary tool in understanding the logic in which the state runs its political, economic, and social policy. Un-democratic rule amongst its own citizens, deep relationships with external powers, and a corrupt system of governance has been central to the NDP and the Military Junta ruling the country. In 2011, in Mubarak's thirtieth year in power, the Egyptian people staged a revolution that would finally oust the thirty-year ruler out of his post. Since the ousting of Mubarak, Egypt has endured a tumultuous transitional period filled with human rights abuses, civil disobedience, a lack of security, the election and disbandment of parliament, and the election of new President Mohamed Morsi. The reasons behind why the movement continues, with citizens applying intense pressure on government, will be made clear throughout this paper.

Literature Review: The Transformation of “State” and “Civil Society”

For thirty years, the Mubarak regime oppressively ruled Egypt as a continuation of a military dictatorship instilled during the 1952 military “revolution.” It was not until January 25th 2011 that popular civil resistance and disobedience erupted in Cairo and surrounding governorates, which led to the ousting of the former president Hosni Mubarak and many of his supporters. Although many rogue members of the former ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) were eventually knocked out of leadership roles, the existence of a counter-revolution continues through the political survival of an authoritarian system. A state with an authoritarian system was bound to have a serious power vacuum without its head leadership. The group who believes they can fill the void of political leadership in hopes of instilling a more socially-conscious government is the

Muslim Brotherhood (MB), once an illegal organization built on the religious principles of Islam. With crippled institutions and an overpowering military, the current government behind the newly-elected President Morsi is battling to facilitate a constituent assembly (that is currently tasked with writing a constitution that represents all Egyptians), create parliamentary elections, alleviate the painful blow of an inflated economy, and attempt to fulfill the demands of the revolutionary movement, all the while fulfilling the political needs of his respective party (the Freedom and Justice Party).

For this master's thesis, research has been conducted that will identify what the state of Egypt looks like in terms of the new structure and centers of power, along with what the varying political and social dynamics of civil society are in Egypt. Some key questions are: a) Who are the varying influential actors and are these actors working for the collective advancement of society or do they have their own interests while being a coercive tool for the state? b) What does civil society look like in Egypt? In order to counter the recent literature on state-society relations that suggests that empowering civil society will result in democratization, the theoretical development of both the state and civil society over time will be presented.

What is the state and civil society in the Egyptian (North African) context? Certainly understanding the political and social dynamics of the "Arab," "North African" state can open the doors to understanding what is civil society in Egypt. What is often left out of the discussion throughout this transformation is how there are sharp differences in state development, particularly when looking at "underdeveloped," "developing," and "developed" nations. Central authority varies from state-to-state depending on the historical and contemporary context. Unfortunately, the academic field

in the “developed” world has painted the discussion of the modern state by comparing Western nations (Europe and the U.S.), or the developed world, to the Global South or developing world. States with a less legitimate or encompassing central authority are interpreted as “weak” or having “failed.” This presents fundamental problems for the analysis of the state in the context of developing countries when they are compared in a developed world context.

With tomorrow filled with uncertainty, this thesis will look to determine what the future holds for Egypt, particularly between the shifting political and social dynamics of civil society within the State. This literature review will first take a look at the varying interpretations of the *State*, its function, and what I have become comfortable to theoretically describe as the Egyptian state. Second, the root and many meanings of *civil society* will be put in to context in order to better conceptualize its role in Egypt’s society. This literature review will be organized as follows: a) classical definitions and interpretations of the State, b) classical definitions and interpretations of civil society, c) problems with contemporary definitions of civil society, and d) interpretations of the state and civil society in a developing world context. This review of the literature will be used to identify the common trends and schools of thought. However, most importantly, it will provide the context, background, and location of where the ideologies of this thesis will reside.

Classical Definitions and Interpretations of the State

Understanding the dynamics of a civil society warrants a clear understanding of exactly what the State is, particularly when describing Egypt. The basic online search took me to *The Routledge Encyclopedia of International Political Economy*, by Barry

Jones, providing the etymology of the word *State* and saying that the term derives from the Latin, *status*, or literally social status within a community. The Thomas Barfield's *Dictionary of Anthropology* says that the state is a complex system of human society used to organize extensive populations and is made up of a "hierarchy of offices associated with specialized institutions that are financed by a political economy...General categories of state institution include administrative bureaucracies, legal systems, and military and religious organizations. Such institutions represent different sources of power- economic, political, military, and ideological" (Barfield, pg.445).

One of the most commonly accepted interpretations is Max Weber's definition of the state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Weber, Gerth and Mills, 1948: 78). With this interpretation, the state is often seen as having "legitimate" authority. The state, or central authority, can legitimately use force to achieve its goals, can use violence against an individual or a group, can use the legal system to imprison citizens, and can wage war... and most individuals would agree that the state is legitimate in their actions and capabilities. According to Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, the state is a product of reason, a highly rational system of order. With Weber's definition, the state or central authority consists of several mechanisms, to create and pass laws, a bureaucracy for implementing laws or other governmental decisions within state institutions, maintain local security with a police force that maintains a prison system, and finally, to secure the borders with armed forces of the state against external threats. These mechanisms are the staple functions of the state, however, some sociologists have extended state institutions

to nationalized departments, for instance the Postal Service, or as seen in Europe, health and education services.

The state has developed over the twentieth century to become the most dominant form of characterizing and controlling territory and people. Still, there are various forms of the state that must be discussed before demonstrating the type of state Egypt has become in the Twenty-First Century. The most notable among these is the stateless society, or Nuer society, discussed by E.E. Evans-Pritchard in the, Nuer, a Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People. Pritchard's research in Africa recognized a society consisting of forty distinct tribes that had no government and no legal system while handing no special responsibilities to selected members of society. Decisions that affected their society as a whole were reached through informal means of discussion between different members of each tribe. The Nuer society is stateless because it lacks a formal governing body capable of legitimizing force or control over society.

The feudal state, best seen as an early developer of the modern state, lacks a central authority with legitimate control over society. Although monarchs ruled feudal states, with ultimate power in the hands of a king or queen, control over territory and military was in the hands of governors and lords of a particular region. Power was dispersed throughout society allowing aristocrats to rule their territory in the name of the monarch. It was not until the Seventeenth Century where it is apparent that the French monarchy developed a centralized authority over its territory, however, centralized authority and the beginning of the modern state could not develop until the Nineteenth Century when transportation and communication progressed and expanded. The modern

state is the centralized state, which characterizes the majority of nation-states in this world. The modern state consists of a central power, or government, with an increased role within the state, such as greater influence on the economy, military power, and overall control. The modern state is a heavily scrutinized, researched, and debated phenomenon as centralized authority takes on responsibility for the well being of society. Still, modernity of the state does not imply that central authority will function in the best interests of all members of the state, as governments have been known to represent the interests of those in power.

Pluralist theories of the state act as an institutional referee that allows all competing groups within society to have an equal opportunity in the governmental/policy decision-making process. Governmental power is divided into various competing agencies rather than from a central authority. Societal power is decentralized and is wielded by competing, diverse societal forces that equally share influence. With a plethora of competing groups working for their own interests, the state coordinates differences between conflicting interests in the hope of promoting a well-balanced and shared existence. The state in this society is often influenced by democratic values and principles that empower average individuals and groups to accomplish as much political power as their lives would permit them. The political process for policy making is reliant on the political activity of competing and associated groups, as it is their responsibility to advocate and lobby towards the public, government representatives, and other groups with similar interests. Arnold Rose, a pluralist theorist, asserted “political power is distributed over as many citizens working through their associations as want to take responsibility for power, through the voluntary association the ordinary citizen can

acquire as much as power in the community or nation as their free time, ability and inclinations permit them.” Individuals may even associate themselves with varying, overlapping organizations or causes. This allows power to be distributed among various organizations and associations without having a dominant, all-powerful force that is agreed with by all members of society. This model is widely seen as inapplicable to states besides the U.S. and generates the assumption that formal political institutions play an unbiased or equitable role in policy making. Ultimately, the state is not an impartial intermediary and has its own agenda.

The “Elite pluralism theory” led by renowned academics Seymour Martin Lipset and Robert Dahl’s “Polyarchy” uses the pluralist model to combine elite rule and democracy. Various competing groups are led, influenced by elites that apply political pressure for their interests, while minority groups are incapable of having their interests represented. Democratic principles are shifted away from the interests of the ‘average’ individual and instead surround the competing interests of elites. Political participation becomes distrusted as powerless groups and individuals lose power and influence to elite interests.

The “elite theory” contains similar principles to the “elite pluralism theory” in that elite groups are in control of key resources and institutions, which results in varying elitist groups holding the majority of power. The intention of the elite class is to always hold on to power, to any extent necessary. The two driving ideas behind this theory is that firstly, elites are set apart from the masses due to their resources, education, overall capability and secondly, that this process is a natural product of society as influential elites who have authority are seen as necessary leaders. Pareto believed that there are two

types of elites, one that holds power through governance and the other that is non-governing and utilizes elitist tools of resources and intelligence to coerce and manipulate members and groups of society. Mosca emphasized the fact that elite group interests and values become the dominating principles of society because of the heavy influence on social and political institutions. Elites are well organized and the masses are not. Additionally, he asserted that societies are divided into two distinct groups, the rulers and the ruled. The ruling class is made up of elites that rule and govern the mass population. In contemporary power elite theory C. Wright Mills understood societal power to reside in within key social and political institutions that were run by an elite class. At the same time non-governing elites have a monopoly over economic institutions, control the majority of the state's wealth, and therefore can affect policy making in government. He does not however deem the mass population to be incapable or incompetent, rather, elites manipulate and exploit the masses in order to keep the mass population in a state of confusion, ignorance and powerlessness. Furthermore, social groups within the mass population are able to benefit from the elitist ruling class, which results in divisions within the powerless.

In conflict theories of the state, the economic sphere is understood as separate and apart from government institutions; however, Karl Marx believed that having control over the means of production is the primary principle for the ruling class in society. Marxist theory suggests that economic activity is central to life and that politics, education, the legal system, and religious or cultural institutions are a result of economics. He essentially states that societal power derives from economic dominance and that controlling the means of production perpetuates class domination of society.

Marx developed the concept that political warfare is class warfare and that power is a result of economic domination.

Antonio Gramsci's intellectual work has been of great service to the conceptualization of dynamics within the state. The state, Antonio Gramsci asserted is the unity of political and civil society, both jockeying for political, cultural, and ideological hegemony. He believed the state to be nothing but a tool or instrument for coercion, a "super-structure" of hegemonic dominance, and identified two kinds of states that represented the conditions of Europe. Firstly, the state is a dictatorship, a coercive multi-faceted system that dominates over society. Secondly, that the state is the totality of social, economic, political, and cultural relations that together form a given political and social order, resulting in a cultural and political hegemony. This dualistic understanding of the state can also be better understood as Gramsci's "east vs. west" distinction. In the east, the state is fully dominant as civil society is seen as "gelatinous". This kind of state domination results in civil society being suppressed, which only survives on challenging state hegemony. In the west, the state and civil society is equal to the state. Civil society traditionally is a function of the state, which is a tool for coercion and acquiring hegemonic dominance over the system of governance and power. Gramsci expressed in his work, *The Prison Notebooks*, that the state is the unity of civil society and political society, similarly translated to the state being a combination of hegemony and dictatorship. From now on, hegemony refers to the domination and coerciveness of the state and the ruling power within the state- whether economic, political, cultural, etc. For instance, educational and religious institutions have the ability to be dominant in what is being taught and "believed" in by the mass population. Furthermore, these institutions are a function of the state therefore the state is able to have social and political hegemony.

Ji-Hyang Jang in her article, *Weak State, Weak Civil Society*, asserts the theoretical opposite of pluralism by introducing the ‘corporatist’ state. Rather than Gramsci’s east versus west scenario, they present the discussion on the state as a “pluralism versus corporatism” scenario. The pluralist state “is viewed as a collection of individuals occupying particular official roles and as an arena within which societal actors struggle to ensure the success of their own particular preferences through electoral pressure and lobbies” (Jang, 2009: 82). The pluralist state is more like a referee, serving as a facilitator of interest groups and institutions, in order for state hegemony. Inversely, the state in the “corporatism paradigm is the decisional and authoritative structure linked with the associationally organized interests of civil society” (Jang, 2009: 82). The corporatist structure finds a greater role for the state in order to directly manipulate the economy and the social groups of society. Furthermore, pluralists and corporatists “offer opposing political remedies and divergent images of the institutional form that such a modern system of interest representation will take. The former suggest spontaneous formation, numerical proliferation, horizontal extension, and competitive interaction; the latter advocate controlled emergence, quantitative limitation, vertical stratification, and complementary interdependence” (Schmitter 1979: 16). Jang makes the direct comparison of the corporatist state and several Arab nations, including Egypt. This is because the state heavily intervenes in the economy, is the primary catalyst for economic development, and the corporatist state is the only actor that can make the necessary market and political prescriptions, whether this occurs is another story. The state (government) then successfully has pinned itself in a “permanent” state of hegemony, while civil society, as Gramsci pointed out, is “gelatinous”.

Definitions and Interpretations of Civil Society

What is civil society? The term “civil society” is often employed to describe a coercive function of the state, or as a challenger and/or an advocator of state hegemony. Civil society was already a relevant term pre-revolution, particularly when it came to the overgrown development apparatus that resides in Egypt. Still, the term civil society has taken on a new relevance in Egypt, post-revolution, especially as social and political scientists wrestle with the term and its influence on the Arab social movements. Civil society has taken on different roles and meanings over time and within varying state structures, which is why I will be highlighting its transformation over time and space.

The etymological roots of civil society, without digging too deeply and with valuable help, can be found in the foundations of early European society Latin, where *civis* means citizen and *civitas* means civil, the embodiment of community, city, state, and the body of citizens within it. There are many scholars over time that have indeed influenced the classical meaning, character, and interpretation of civil society, namely, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, Hegel, Marx and Gramsci. However it is through the use of Gramsci’s work on civil society that will represent the majority of classical interpretations of the term.

In the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci argues that the roots of a functioning civil society, as a superstructure challenging the state, can be traced to the rise of the Catholic Church and the gradual fall of the Holy Roman Empire. The church had the capability to challenge state hegemony due to their influence on, for example, growing religious identity, individualism, social life, and education. Only the church had the power capabilities of altering state ideology in favor of another hegemonic force, their selves.

With the church and state hegemony swinging side to side, the state was never fully able to dominate the church and vice versa. This then created a new space, a space that exists between hegemonies, where social groups, media, organizations, and religious institutions could challenge and debate state hegemony.

Gramsci's valiant attempt in conceptualizing civil society began originally as a plan to "discover the political, theoretical, and strategic means to organize and mobilize subordinate groups within society so that they might usher in a new form of state and order" (Fontana, 1993: 342). For Gramsci, civil society includes the whole of the ideological, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual life. He did not consider the market or economics to play a role in civil society and believed civil society to represent the active and positive moments of historical development. In many ways he considered civil society to be the "arena of struggle". Additionally, he claimed that civil society would be the super-structure capable of challenging the state. By 'challenging', Gramsci meant the swallowing of political society, the end of the state, the altering of a state system and of political ideology. Gramsci believed the integral state to be civil and political society; meaning civil society is a part of the state. However, "in his (Gramsci's) view, civil society, far from being inimical to the state, is, in fact, its most resilient constitutive element, even though the most immediately visible aspect of the state is political society, with which it is all too often mistakenly identified. He was also convinced that the intricate, organic relationships between civil society and political society enable certain strata of society not only to gain dominance within the state but also, and more importantly, to maintain it, perpetuating the subalternity of other strata." (Buttigieg, pg. 4; 1995) This point of an organic relationship between the civil and the political is

certainly a key feature of the relationships within the Egyptian state. The supremacy of an individual social group manifests itself in two ways, firstly, through domination and secondly, through moral and intellectual leadership. A social group must exercise leadership before winning governmental power, as it is through that leadership that ideologies and values can be represented in order to attain the favor of social groups. However, if it is to “hold power firmly within its grasp, the social group must continue to ‘lead’” (Fontana, 1993: 343).

The primary differences between Gramscian and Hegelian theory regarding the functions of civil society and the state are that Hegel believed the state to be a natural phenomenon, one that can be seen as a positive moment in the historical development of human history. Gramsci believed the state to be none other than an instrument or coercive tool of the state. Secondly, Gramsci asserted that civil society was ideological, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of society, while, Hegel would later critique his assertion, saying that, the economic-financial sphere of society is also a part of civil society. Both Gramsci and Hegel believed civil society to be the ethical content of the state. This is extremely relevant considering Egypt’s civil society is diverse in its ethical nature while differing in Egypt’s course for the future.

Jeffrey Church has also added to the discussion of civil society by determining the differences between Rousseau and Hegel, who were particularly fixated on what would happen to civil society if it included the commercial industry and economic spheres of life. Church asserts one of Rousseau’s main arguments from the *Social Contract*, saying, “human desire in commercial societies has become insatiably expensive and increasingly detached from genuine political communities” (Church, 2009: 125). Rousseau believed

that commercial societies ultimately end up with citizens caring more about their individual welfare over the welfare of others or the community as a whole. Citizens then become ‘unsatisfied’ with life because of their selfishness, which undermines their own individual civic participation for the community. Hegel, in the *Philosophy of Right*, believed civil society institutions to be the answer to Rousseau’s problem. For Hegel, it is the goal of these institutions within civil society to curb irrational individual desires in favor for rational desires of the common good.

State and civil society theories of Fontana, Bobbio, and Buttigieg, believe that Gramsci’s writings also provide elaborate insight on the functions, players, and on the capabilities of challenging state hegemony. In congruence with the Gramscian school of thought, Fontana, in his work *Political Space and Hegemonic Power*, expresses the importance of physical space, geography, and a large structural presence. Property and large structures of the state, along with fortresses and institutions of civil society, are meant to protect the state. These structures further convolute the presence of the multi-dimensional super-structure of power, known as the state, in order to increase a veiled coercion. Fontana asserted “Civil society is envisioned as constituted by multiple and overlapping spheres. Civil society is not one and harmonious, but a plurality of spaces, socio-political and physical/territorial” (Fontana, 1993: 345). Within the same article, he explains that, “the greater the structural complexity, the more the ideological systems of belief and thought are embedded within the population, the less transparent the coercive nature of the state appears, and the more effective and consequential become the instruments of persuasion and consent” (Fontana, 1993: 348) Joseph Buttigieg, in the journal “Boundary 2”, wrote on the contemporary discourse on civil society. Buttigieg

believed many present theorists have misinterpreted Gramsci's understanding that civil society was certainly an important part of the state, as opposed to a separate, anti-state institution. He asserts in his article that, "Gramsci regarded civil society as an integral part of the state; in his view, civil society, far from being inimical to the state, is, in fact, its most resilient constitutive element, even though the most immediately visible aspect of the state is political society, with which it is all too often mistakenly identified. He was also convinced that the intricate, organic relationships between civil society and political society enable certain strata of society not only to gain dominance within the state but also, and more importantly, to maintain it, perpetuating the subalternity of other strata" (Buttigieg, 1995: 4).

Classical civil society, as James Ferguson argued in his work *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, "still had a rather antique cast to it when I [he] first encountered it in graduate seminars on social theory." The classical use of civil society had seen little alterations from Hegelian, Marxist, and Gramscian theories up until the mid-twentieth century cold-war period that began the inception of social movements and particularly throughout the debate of Communist versus Democratic hegemony. Indeed civil society has been altered to fit the contemporary context and became especially popular among liberal scholars for the purposes of social movement theory and neoliberal thought. The following section will discuss the transformation of civil society as a superstructure of society outside of the political realm, to the more recent belief in literature and policy that civil society is a democratic arena for challenging state dominance led by innovative, energetic grassroots initiatives, associations, and organizations.

The Universalization of Civil Society as a Grassroots Actor

Interpretations of civil society have gone through transformations as the role of the state has developed over time. What was once classically believed to be civil society in the west has changed significantly in a time when state power is evidently growing weaker, rolling back the state in favor of a long suffocated civil society. The term gained its popularity in large part to the growing struggles for political and social space between people and their government, mostly constituting of military dictatorships. Civil society is now something to be supported, to build capacity for, just as “development” has a staple role in “still developing” societies. What was once described as everything outside of the government and political realm is now often times being defined to describe specific sectors of the state, specifically non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and grassroots organizations. Civil Society International produces their own definition, saying “Perhaps the simplest way to see civil society is as a “third sector,” distinct from government and business. In this view, civil society refers essentially to the so-called “intermediary institutions” such as professional associations, religious groups, and labor unions, citizen advocacy organizations that give voice to various sectors of society and enrich public participation in democracies.” Civil society is contemporarily seen as the path to democracy, a sector of society that is necessary to develop, as it is a democratic arena for social groups and organizations outside of the state to alter, improve, criticize, and take action for ideologies that do or do not represent society. This newer relationship between state and civil society is commonly referred to as the “state-society paradigm.”

The late twentieth century, along with the new century, ushered in a new class of political scientists and anthropologists alike that have taken a new direction in defining the civil society sector. The term has been uniquely modified as a major step for emerging democracies, as naturally democratic sector of society, as “the local”, and as the home for voluntary civil society organizations that work on “the ground” to defend social justice issues and to claim space from political society. This notion rivals the earlier “nation-building” theory that understood the “state”, or national level of government, as a “new, dynamic, progressive national level energizing and overcoming an old, stagnant, reactionary local level, the new view reverses these values” (Ferguson, 2007: 96). The universalization of civil society as grassroots actors most certainly spawned from the political liberalization of Latin America and Eastern Europe as their societies struggled but successfully challenged communist hegemony. Not coincidentally, the state-society model was championed by Western democracies, including former U.S. President Reagan and former British Prime Minister Thatcher, perhaps planting the seeds for a post-socialist rhetoric and paving the way for the future democratization of the “developing world”. Civil society has become so intertwined with “democracy”, supporting the local, and grassroots organizations that discrediting it would seem like discrediting a pacifist’s or environmentalist’s intentions. This why civil society today is relevant in policy making, in scholarly literature, and in the media, because just as state’s want to be democratic, there is high demand for growing and empowering civil society. Furthermore, civil society is intimately intertwined with the development field, only strengthening its inorganic ties to the nation-state’s path to democracy. The resurgence of civil society, both theoretically and in policy, is made evident by the relationship of

foreign, and specifically, Western development agencies that have utilized civil society globally as a means to influence hegemony and avoid the lack of cooperation coming from national governments.

James Ferguson responds to the definition and use of the term “civil society”, without getting deeply into the genealogy of the phrase, and references Scottish Enlightenment theorists Francis Hutcheson, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith, as well as other European thinkers Hegel, Marx and Gramsci, to arrive to the basic concept that civil society is most commonly used in “discussions of democracy, especially to refer to voluntary organizations and NGOs that seek to influence, or claim space from, the state” (Ferguson, 2007: 90). This understanding of civil society has made way for the fact that “civil society” has become a universalized concept, filling the void for other state challengers (communism) and best describing the post-cold war period of state dominance versus the group assembled as “everyone else”. The state’s power, particularly in African politics, is well represented by economically active military forces, dictatorial ruling parties, security-police forces, over-sized bureaucracies, weak state institutions, and a national ideology that leaves the rest of the nation for “the opposition” or “civil society”. Ferguson writes, “Indeed, it has become one of those things (like development, education, or the environment) that no reasonable person can be against” (pg.91). This is a profound statement because the activity of civil society is championed by both the state and the opposition, right or left, and both sides nurture different and opposed ideologies for civil society’s role within the state- though both recognizing it’s importance. Questionable? Perhaps this is why the genealogy of the term is vital. While the universalized use of civil society implies democratic principles of

equality, whether true or not, the study of civil society within the African context, as Ferguson puts it, “obscures more than it reveals” and in several case can be a force that legitimizes undemocratic principles of African politics and the state (Ferguson, 2007: 91). Still, the resurgence of civil society in Africa is mostly tied to the process of democratization and these cases have emphasized a larger role for civil society and less a role for the state, for better or worse.

When imagining what the state looks like in this state-society paradigm, writers Mahmood Mamdani and Jurgen Habermas create a visualization of state-civil society relations as being vertical and hierarchal. Mamdani explains that civil society is “sandwiched between the patriarchal family and the universal state” (Mamdani, 1996). Similarly, Habermas describes civil society as being the “public sphere” that mediates between the state and the local. This imagery allows one to believe, or interpret, the state as being a “higher power” while civil society is on the ground or local. This vertical relationship is heavily scrutinized by James Ferguson, and rightfully so, as he too questions not only the vertical hierarchy of state-society relations but also the misleading manner in which the state is seen as “above”, “up top”, and “too-far to reach”. The vertical alignment claim is to the advantage of state power or political society, as Ferguson asserts, “these claims naturalize the authority of the state over “the local” by merging three analytically distinct ideas-superior spatial scope; supremacy in a hierarchy of power; and superior generality of interest, knowledge, and moral purpose- into a single figure, the “up there” state that encompasses the local and exists on a “higher level”” (Ferguson, 2007: 92).

Additionally, Gramsci points to how dominant social groups can pin the subaltern groups against one another in order to fulfill that one group's hegemonic dominance. In Egypt the state repeatedly creates divisions between the varying groups of society, leaving little room for cooperation, unity, and cohesiveness among civil society. Long-term development is difficult and unappreciated due to limited funds, government support, and lack of networking; this makes way for those with the finances to determine major courses of development. Furthermore, the state has infiltrated institutions, organizations, and NGOs in order to maintain rhetoric and ideological dominance.

Civil society, as many have come to know it and how I've always been taught, is a dynamic sphere of grassroots and dynamic local organizations that have the interests of the population at heart. These organizations suffered at the hands of the state and need more space and financial support for them to be successful in their development goals. However what is left out of the assumption, as Jane Guyer claimed, "the obvious: that civil society is largely made up of international organizations (Guyer 1994:223, Ferguson pg. 101)." This statement cannot be made any clearer and rivals civil society perceptions published by the UN and other organizations.

In a CIVICUS civil society index report (Civicus, 2010: 5) on Egypt highlights civil society as being, up until recently, a fuzzy grey area where civil society mostly described the registered civic associations under the Ministry of Social Affairs. Since this definition does not quite fulfill the entirety of civil society, especially considering the number of informal organizations not tied down to the government or "Gongos" who are inherently tied to the government, civil society in Egypt is not easily defined. Similarly, The UN 2008 Egypt Human Development Report determined that civil society in Egypt

is “a social space occupied by citizens in which they organize themselves voluntarily to promote common values and objectives... and is an arena of voluntary collective actions around shared interests, purposes and values distinct from family, state, and profit-seeking institutions. It is a particular space in a society where people come together to debate, associate and seek to influence broader society.” Both reports develop a borderline confusing; broad, non-specific, definition of civil society, with the Civicus report even stating that civil society is not easily defined. That is because, Egyptian civil society is not inherently “Egyptian” as we are meant to believe and is heavily affected, funded, scrutinized, and directed by external entities of the neoliberal development industry. While many of these organizations may have positive intentions for the ‘local’ or civil society, the influence of transnational organizations and global civil society on national civil society must be questioned further, perhaps altering the preconceived notion that civil society is “local or grassroots”, is in the best interest of the local population, or that civil society works outside of political society. Similarly, the phrase “GONGO” or “governmental non-governmental organizations” comes to mind when considering Egyptian civil society, and while they are an essential part of the transnational circuit, their relevance as ‘grass root’ is questionable. Civil society in the “state-society” paradigm are supposed to have a vested interest in limiting the state’s reach and dominance, instead, it is infiltrated by organizations that are government influenced or controlled- expanding the reach and power of the state- creating what may be the biggest oxymoron of twenty first century politics.

The Two Paradigms of the State (James Ferguson, pg.98)

National	<u>Nation-Building</u>	<u>State and Society</u>
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	National integration: Modernity: + Democracy: + Development: + Progress: +	The State: Modernity: - Democracy: - Development: - Progress: -
Local	Tribal, Primordial attachments: Modernity: - Democracy: - Development: - Progress: -	Civil Society: Modernity: + Democracy: + Development: + Progress: +

Civil Society in the Egyptian Context: A Critique

Today, when analyzing the Egyptian revolution and other popular social movements against state leadership of the Arab world, it becomes ever more urgent to understand the current role of civil society along with the importance of understanding what kind of practices it is involved in. James Ferguson's analysis states that civil society must be reinterpreted, re-imagined, and re-understood, before making claims of an undefined, broad civil society, in order to correctly capture what civil society is in actuality and therefore correctly capturing the role of civil society in post-revolution Egypt. This section will discuss the problems with today's understanding of civil society as a grassroots actor and why the re-conceptualization of civil society is vital.

Ferguson's vivid description of the vertical topography of power brings to mind images of the mighty Egyptian state, the Pharaoh, the Father, the nurturer, the scientist, the businessman, the protector of his people, and the one who knows best for a successful society. Is civil society really the space where the father and his leadership, "the state", meet his children, "society", and shows face to the community? This mental image may

serve well as the state's interpretation of their role among civil society. Rather than perpetuating the belief that civil society is "the local" while the state lays "above us all", Ferguson recommends a "horizontal topography of power" that claims there are these new political entities, that can often equal the strengths and capabilities of African nation-states. The IMF, WB, UN, and hundreds of transnational organizations 'developing' the 'undeveloped' represents a "new apparatus [that] does not *replace* the older system of nation-states, but overlays it and coexists with it...the new organizations that have sprung up in recent years not as challengers pressing up against the state from below but as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state—sometimes rivals, sometimes servants, sometimes watchdogs, sometimes parasites, but in every case operating on the same level and in the same global space" (Ferguson, 2007:103). If domination of the state is rooted to state power, as political society, then according to the state and society paradigm, rolling back the power of the state would lead to more freedom of civil society and ultimately more "democracy". Ferguson, referencing the recent African colonial period, knows that non-state actors have also dominated the state, more specifically by private corporations, as some even hold a private army and can often dictate to the state. One must come to realize that using today's understanding of civil society, especially in policy for the "developing world", can be dangerous for society's well being. Western Policy and foreign aid promotes civil society in the developing world in the hope of empowering "the bottom" of society or the mass population of these nations. Instead, promoting and empowering civil society has resulted in the convenient funding of transnational and government influenced organizations that work within and for the system, perpetuating the current dynamics of power.

A first step made in altering the conceptualization of civil society is to recognize that a top-down, vertical approach of the state does not correctly portray the state's relation to civil society. The altering of this concept will simultaneously challenge scholarly approaches to civil society-state relations as well as unintentionally challenging the ruling power's own awareness of supposedly residing on the top of the 'food chain' or above the rest of society. The government and military of Egypt, Egyptian political society, does believe that they are in fact untouchable and above the rest of society, however, Egyptian political society does not have the institutional capacity to bring about economic, social, and political change—which is why altering the vertical top-down approach may actually assist in lessening expectations of government, although this is an unlikely reaction from the state.

Civil society must be conceptualized, not as a simple grass root actor, but as it really is, an elaborate network of transnational and local organizations that are led and often funded by governmental and intergovernmental organizations of the world. The term is referenced broadly just as often as it is referenced specifically, highlighting society as a whole but sometimes categorizing civil society organizations (CSOs) as strictly grass root or voluntary. Ferguson asks an important question, "one is never sure: Is the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa part of this "civil society"? John Garang's army in Sudan? Oxfam? What about ethnic movements that are not opposed to or prior to modern states, but produced by them? What about Christian mission organizations, which are arguably more important today in Africa than ever but are strangely relegated to the colonial past in the imagination of much contemporary scholarship (Ferguson, 2007: 98-99)?" Is civil society simply broken down into

categories and what constitutes as a CSO? Where is the line drawn between state and civil society, and who is who? Arguably all of these organizations play a role within the state, but cannot be cleanly labeled or identified as the traditional “civil society actor” that works for the interests of society over the state.

Without drawing deeply into my research, the role of supposed “civil society organizations” within the state is so badly characterized and understood that it is reasonable to question the motives, the alliances, and the agendas of what civil society is in Egypt, and as Ferguson described earlier, the term civil society “obscures more than it reveals.” In some cases, the state begins to look like civil society, with registered Governmental Non-Governmental organizations (GONGOS) doing the development work. With the euphoria of the recent uprising and revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak lessening by the day, the transnational development apparatus has made a point to be more actively involved in Egypt’s growth- similar to the Mubarak regime. Since President Morsi has been elected, he has looked for IMF loans, continues to rely on US funding, and increased Saudi Arabian and Islamic funding, while at the same time appealing to the social movement and liberal base of organizations that want to support “the revolutionaries”. The state has reaped the benefits of this social movement, sadly, falling into the same debt trap as his predecessor.

Furthermore, the reconceptualization of civil society is necessary to determine whether Egyptian civil society is legitimate in working for the best interests of the country or whether it is in fact a variation of coercive organizations with interests outside the Egyptian people at the epicenter of their beliefs. Egyptian civil society must be separated from global civil society, and local organizations must be differentiated

between transnational organizations, and vice versa. It is clear that funding civil society is necessary, however where does the money come from? What is the agenda and program of donor organizations, especially government donors? There are many local grassroots organizations that are not capable in carrying out their goals without the assistance or support of transnational organizations with shared interests, however, can local communities and organizations receive funding for their work in civil society without the funding being either, tied to the local government's agenda, or to the imperialist agendas of foreign governments? There are examples of this happening though resulting in a harsh clamp down (accompanied by office raids) by the government.

While funding civil society carries a great level of importance, it is also worth noting that transnational organizations can have positive effects on a local civil society. Transnational connections have allowed local communities to creatively challenge the state in ways that the national government is unaware of. Grassroots organizations are well established and can use funding for creating even more space for civil society, easily surprising the state. However, there is now a network of transnational organizations that are connected to the global as much as the local, and will have their largest effect on global public opinion- allowing these organizations to apply "watchdog" like pressure on the not so local actions of the state. Local organizations can now easily link their cause for the cause of transnational organizations, increasing global appeal, interest, and in general the kind of global activity that the state would like to stay away from- particularly when actively violating human rights.

Civil Society in a 'Strong versus Weak' State

This literature review brings to focus the distinct and differing nature of the ‘state’ and civil society’s role within it. What needs to be discussed are the dynamics of the ‘developing’ state and how civil society does indeed serve a differing function than how it is understood in the ‘developed’ world.

In Nazih Ayubi’s article “Over-Stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East” the main argument is that although most Arab states, especially Egypt, are ‘hard’, ‘fierce’ states, and they are not really ‘strong’ states. Meaning, yes, they have large, overbearing bureaucracies, large armies, and a harsh prison system, but they also happen to be “lamentably feeble when it comes to collecting taxes, winning wars or forging a really ‘hegemonic’ power block or an ideology that can carry the state beyond the coercive and ‘corporative’ level and into the moral and intellectual sphere” (Ayubi, 1995). The state is not ‘strong’ because the majority of people does not benefit enough or buy into the current power structure that the Arab state is ruled by, which is arguably a reason why the revolution beginning in 2011 was able to occur.

Halim Barakat eloquently described in his piece “The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State”, that the Arab state can be quite fragmented between civil and political society. Barakat explains that culturally and socially, there is one broad, over-arching society, “Arab”, and it is a social culture independent of the state. In other words, he describes, “Arab society is not a mere mosaic of sects, ethnic groups, tribes, local communities, and regional entities. Rather, it carries within it the potential for both unity and divisiveness...unity versus fragmentation, tradition versus modernity, sacred versus secular, East versus West, local versus national” (Barakat, 1993). This is what Egyptian civil society is dealing with, as Gramsci described, a fight for cultural hegemony. The

current President, Morsi, represents not only Egypt, but also a group (the Muslim Brotherhood) that is challenging Western ideologies in order to achieve the social and cultural hegemony that will allow the civil and the political to share political, economic, and social ethics.

This understanding of Egypt as a state, and the way in which it functions, will be the “Egypt” I will refer to throughout this thesis. Egypt became an official state in 1952 but has had the tendencies of a unified state like structure for millennium. Additionally, colonialism, led by the British and French, was another important factor for the creation of a developed state apparatus, military, and nationalist movements. Gramsci’s “state of the east” is one of state hegemonic domination and a heavily regulated civil society. Similarly, Egypt is dominated by the state; it has a highly regulated, un-united, and malleable civil society- of course unable to truly challenge the state, and in some cases working for its own interests, the interests of the political status-quo, or external forces. State institutions do not provide the necessary assistance to individuals and social groups, instead generally working for the interests of the ruling party. The state owns many high earning industries in order to finance their domination, provides subsidies for a majority of social groups creating dependence, and monitors social and political development to the point that civil society has limited space to effectively challenge or counter-act the state’s faults. Social groups are forced to “wheel and deal”, or bargain, with the state in order find itself in their favor while avoiding marginalization. To be seen in the state’s favor has the same effect as being formalized or supported. Jang’s ‘State Typology’ table is useful for determining Egypt’s functions as a state. For example, corporatist states are seen as having a weak degree of legitimacy and institutional quality, the reason why it is

a corporatist state. Furthermore, the table also shows that the nature of exercising power for corporatist states is through “hard power”. This “hard” power, as asserted by Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, points to the importance of control over resources, military, and financial entities as a necessity for control and domination over society. The use of such resources enables the ruling party to control the behavior of societal actors. Utilizing literature on the conceptualization of the state and its function, Egypt will be determined as a Gramscian state of the east, with a gelatinous civil society given little room to develop, organize, or encompass cultural hegemony, and Ayubi’s corporatist, “hard yet weak” state, which exercises “hard” power but is stricken with a degree of weakness for legitimacy and institutional quality. However, I want to make clear, that the Egypt is not so simply divided between political and civil society institutions. The lines are blurry, many civil society institutions, including religious leadership, for example Al-Azhar, media outlets, and non-governmental organizations are controlled by the state and therefore work against civil society and in favor of state dominance.

Today, the state is often dictated to by another dominate force: transnational organizations, including but not limited to the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, other allied and affiliated banks, and especially government development agencies. This appears to be a form of transnational dominance or “internationalized imperialism” (Frederick Cooper). These organizations, together, promote development practices in the form of structural adjustment programs in order to ‘develop’ the state that is unable to finance the programs themselves- severely imposing on sovereignty. These developmental practices are almost entirely matched with provisions, expectations, and rules that must be upheld

by the recipient government. While these guidelines promote the ideals and values of the universal declaration of human rights and neoliberal macroeconomic policy, and what is often championed as central to any transnational loan program, the devil is most certainly in the details. These policies require “broad macroeconomic interventions as setting currency-exchange rates, but also fairly detailed requirements for curtailing social spending, restructuring state bureaucracies, and so on. In other words, rather significant and specific aspects of state policy, for many African countries, are being directly formulated in places like New York and Washington D.C” (Cooper, 2005:100).

In the case of Care International, they are welcomed by the Egyptian government and even carry on their work through presidential decree, allowing them to avoid any of the basic restrictions found with transnational organizations. In this case, Care Egypt, which is a recipient of USAID money, is relied on to perform the state’s functions by providing schools to more rural communities that see little state intervention. As a result, these schools are not seen as locally created, they are not perceived as a government operation, but they are recognized as “CARE schools” by the local population. Is CARE, who carries out this state function, a prototypical organization of civil society?

Transnational organizations, like CARE, are not well defined and awkwardly play a dual role of both the local and global. Organizations like these, where do they stand in the vertical topography of power? An organization like I have mentioned is certainly not below the state, if they have been performing functions of the state for many decades and is now seen as a staple development provider, where do they stand between the government and the people, or “top” and “bottom”?

Civil society, according to the Egyptian state, is a collection of organizations that are officially legitimized and regulated by the government. Grassroots organizations on the other hand are not considered to be civil society, rather, the government contends that these unofficial, informal groups are a threat to national security and intend on destabilizing the nation.

These analytical alterations will ultimately allow my research and overall thesis to correctly label civil society for what it is, and what it is not. Using the varying literature on civil society, it is important to understand the transformation of the term over time. Referencing classical definitions along with the more contemporary universalization of civil society, as a grassroots actor will set the table for my thesis which questions what Egyptian civil society actually is in practice. My research should allow growth for understanding what civil society looks like in an African country, and may help scholars distinguish between how they define civil society in the future. Additionally, it should also assist in the critique towards transnational organizations and global civil society. My research intends on giving credit to those that deserve it, those that apply pressure on government and do not perpetuate their dominance, those that were involved in the revolution, and namely informal individuals and groups that are hidden under the shadows of large, corporate, CSOs. Furthermore, in fostering a better understanding of CSO's in Egypt, this thesis should be able to make some prescriptions, advice, and speculate on the future direction of civil society- leading to what the future holds for a post-revolution Egypt.

Methodology

Primary, qualitative research was conducted throughout Cairo, Egypt to explore the dynamics in which the Egyptian state and civil society are made up of multiple forces formally and informally, including the “street”, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a robust USAID program and newly formed political parties following the ousting of former president Hosni Mubarak. Due to the nature of this diversity, there were particular challenges, setbacks and experiences that have provided valuable insight. Individuals involved in interviews were potentially at risk based on the politically charged content of questioning, particularly when representing “informal” constituencies, a non-governmental organization or institutions outside of government. With honest questioning came open criticism that then resulted in a potential risk for the interviewees and myself. Understanding these potential risks are crucial not only in a time where the political condition of the state is fragile and sensitive but also regarding the validity of the research collected.

The methodology will provide an outline on the description of sample subjects, access to subjects, the recruitment procedure, the subject consent process, as well as the potential risks and benefits to research subjects. The Egyptian state and civil society are made up of multiple forces formally and informally, including the activists of the “street”, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), USAID, development contractors, religious institutions and newly formed political parties following the ousting of former president Hosni Mubarak. What should be stated is that when I describe individuals as being “educated” I am insinuating their ability to speak multiple languages. This is relevant in regards to the interview process that will occur in both Arabic and English. I will provide a short description of the subjects per sample.

Members of these social forces will be interviewed, along with the use of informative news media sources, in order to determine what civil society is in Egypt and what their role will be in the future image of what Egypt will look like post-revolution.

Sample Description

This research's subject sample includes various actors from the state as well as formal and informal civil society. The single interview with a state actor was with a member of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) although this interview will have a minimal role in the analytical process. Additionally, the MB plays an active role in civil society and cannot be solely seen as a state actor. The remainder of social forces within the state and the remainder of the subjects for this research include members of, what is perceived to be more or less, civil society. These subjects include, local and international NGO workers, one USAID official, development contractors, activists from the left leaning "street" and informal organizations known as initiatives, as well as members of the Mosque and the Coptic Christian church. Similar to the MB interview, interviews with religious institutions (namely the Mosque and the Coptic Church) were limited and have a minimal role in the analysis. For the remainder of this section, each social group/ force in society will be described more in depth. The subjects that are primarily utilized throughout the analytical process are local NGOs, International NGOs, foreign government development agencies that includes USAID and development contractors, as well as a group of grassroots and informal activists. The table below provides more detail of the types of organizations

Local NGOs	International NGOs	Foreign Government Sponsored Development Agencies	Activists/ Informal Orgs.
Masr Al Kheir Education for Employment	CARE Egypt Relief Egypt Plan Egypt	USAID: Democracy and Governance official Three Development Contractors	Three Activists Two members of Initiatives (informal organizations)

Two local NGOs were chosen, varying from development agencies to human rights organizations, and based on the organizations willingness to interview. One or two professionals of those organizations were interviewed from each local organization. The NGOs that I was able to interview members from are Masr Al Kheir and the Education for Employment foundation in Egypt. These individuals are mostly formally educated, have relevant status within the organization, and will be early to middle aged Egyptian Men and Women. Fortunately this will allow for interviews to be conducted in both English and Arabic, as English is an official language of Egypt. All official languages are taught to some degree in public and certainly private schools, which is why a large portion of the educated population is familiar with French and English. As an Egyptian/American, this will inevitably allow for the interview process to be simpler as far as communication is concerned. The primary concern, or risk, for these subjects are that these local NGO workers are members of the vast population of marginalized, naturally as they are regulated by government.

International NGOs were chosen in varying sectors similar to the local NGOs, and include three organizations. These organizations are CARE Egypt, Plan Egypt, and Relief

Egypt. One to two individuals were interviewed from each organization. These individuals were Men and Women, formally educated, twenty-five years to middle-aged individuals who have had little to fear of the state until the recent upheaval. While there are several local Egyptians that are employed by INGOs, a common occurrence is that foreigners, particularly Westerners, receive better services, salary, and rights as staff members. These members of society are highly protected by the state, as in the case of CARE they are protected by presidential decree, and interviews with them should warrant minimal risk. Although the military may not like what these subjects may say, foreigners are not fully subjected to Egyptian law and are therefore also under the protection of their state of origin.

In regards to USAID, it was my desire to interview at least two official current or retired USAID development workers in Egypt. However, I was restricted to one interview with a pivotal staff member of the controversial ‘Democracy and Governance’ sector of USAID. These officials have little to zero fear of the state; however, their reluctance to interview may be based on protocol of some kind. There are also many retired USAID officials who are now involved in other areas of the NGO sector in Egypt that I would like to interview if given permission to do so. I attempted to conduct interviews with members of the U.S. state department though this was a difficult process and resulted in zero interviewees.

Development contractors work under similar circumstances as USAID staff members and are mostly made up of foreigners. I interviewed three development contractors that have worked for the development industry in Egypt for up to twenty years. They are protected both by their state of origin as well as the Egyptian government

because they work in tandem with the Egyptian state for development. Contractors work almost solely on USAID, WB, and IMF projects and therefore they coordinate closely with governmental institutions to implement structural adjustment policies.

The ‘street’ portion of civil society includes my interviews with three activists that have vowed to preserve the purpose of the revolution and continue challenging the state. Furthermore, I interviewed two young women activists involved with various ‘informal’ organizations that work to apply pressure on the state. This arguably included the most sensitive interviews and had to be handled with delicacy and care for their safeties and my own. The members of the youth coalition range from the ages of eighteen to thirty years old but will need the most care and sensitivity when interviewing. They sound older than “youth” but in reality they are still dependent individuals. They have lost friends throughout the duration of the revolution and have seen some difficult days from the security forces and members of the population. While most are formally educated, they are the most “informally” educated having lived their entire lives in a police state and under Mubarak’s authoritative rule. Several of the interview subjects asked to be anonymous following our meeting and therefore even the first names are rarely mentioned.

Access to Subjects

As an Egyptian/ American, born and raised in Cairo, I am fortunate enough to still have a majority of family still residing in Egypt. My personal connection to the community, along with my soon to be finalized Egyptian citizenship, the research

process, particularly how I obtained access to subjects, is sensitive for both local subjects and myself. To obtain these interviews I accessed a number of formal, informal, and previously connected networks. I formally contacted USAID and local/international NGOs in order to receive consent of these interviews. While there was some success from the formal route, there were available close ties to these individuals that I was able to contact. Additionally, I obtained many interviews using the snowball effect. Several interviewees were interested in the research enough to introduce me to various individuals involved with CSOs. Personal acquaintances were made available as an urban youth in Cairo, from my parents as educators, from family members affiliated with NGOs and political parties, and my own connection of attending a high profile, private, international school that has allowed access to varying individuals from the relevant social groups. This school is where the children of USAID development workers, U.S. department of state officials, diplomats, ambassadors, and high-ranking government and military officials attend school. This fortunately has been a resourceful advantage for receiving the attention of these organizations, particularly because few of them are already established connections. Personal connections made it possible to meet with two organization officials and one of the local subjects. Otherwise, formal networks were made without previous association, while informal networks were made possible with the help of reliable informants through who I am personally connected. These informants are more than often a part of the organization and/or community of the subjects I intend to interview. As for the youth movement coalition, I have credible informants that provided individuals capable of performing interviews. Literally phone calls will be made to trusted informants to allow my presence among the youth members. Many individuals

had an interest to interview, as a tool for relaying their broader message, though I chose three key individuals. These activists have spent the majority of the past year in Tahrir square, the geographical symbol of the ‘street’ civil society and the location of where these relationships were established.

Recruitment Procedure

Participation of the subjects for interviews were obtained through the application of face-to-face requests, emails, phone calls, and snowball sampling. Original contacts required either one-phone call with informants and organizations or by email; however, in certain instances I formally approached organizations face-to-face to discuss the purpose of my study rather than carrying it out on the phone or by email. Particularly with the local population, people respond to face-to-face contact to properly assess the interaction in order to better judge my intentions as the interviewer. Still, the snowball sampling proved to be the most common form of recruiting interviewees. Snowball sampling provided a more comfortable setting with several individuals because of the vital application of trust between interviewees and myself.

In the case that face-to-face contacts were not successful in obtaining interviewees, then these contacts would no longer be considered. Two forms of contact on a subject will be the limit because there are many available subjects within an organization that may be available. Similarly, organizations that passed on providing consent for interviews would not be contacted multiple times. There were several international and local NGOs to choose from that run on similar agendas, share similar purposes of function, and receive similar amounts of ridicule and regulation from the government. Within the Coptic Orthodox church and Mosque there are many spiritual

leaders, sheikhs/priests, who would have been open to a conversational discussion on what the future holds for Egyptian society. During the interview with a member of the MB, my informant Mahmoud (an aspiring journalist) provided the access and was vital to obtaining this interview with a generally closed society. All in all, many individuals from all social groups were willing to divulge in their own version of the state of Egyptian civil society. You see it on late night news stations, where there is an influx of heated social, economic, and political discussion between individuals on television or those who call in to join the conversation. It is clear that the majority of the population feels that they have a stake in the future process. This is why the recruitment procedure was not as difficult as expected. What was difficult: determining and clarifying the voices, individual opinions, and stances of the subjects within each social group interviewed.

As far as receiving the necessary consent for the interview process, a form of written consent or vocal consent was provided for every possible subject. I also vocally presented the consent process in order to validate the subjects understanding of their individual rights within the interview. The forms were provided in both English and Arabic according to the subject's ethnicity, although there was subjects who only received the consent form in either only English or Arabic, based on their linguistic background. In a few cases where informed consent from a subject was difficult to obtain, I replaced it with vocal consent. This was necessary due to the security situation, the perceived alienation of the subject for having to sign a document, as well as the social situation, for example if I were in front of multiple peers in the vicinity and had individuals sign a paper it will not be welcomed. If vocal consent was not provided then they were not able to participate. I made this fact known by simply explaining to them

my background as an Egyptian student who is performing research on the functions of the state along with the work of civil society. If they had little interest in participating or they were skeptical of the study, which was understandable, they were notified that the process was entirely voluntary. In the case that individuals were uncomfortable with specific questions, they were allowed to avoid questions and leave them unanswered at their request.

Interview Procedure

Subjects took part in a conversational experience with the aim of creating a comfortable environment. There was zero exposure to film, music, surveys, no experimental interventions or manipulations of any kind. Consent for voice recording interviews was made clear in person and entirely voluntary. Interviews were based around functions of employment, what the organization provides to the state, what their relationship with the government is like, the effects of government influence, their relationship with the people they serve, etc. these questions could be passed over in order to avoid putting the subject into an uncomfortable position. If there are conflicts of interest they were not a part of the questioning from the beginning. Local NGO workers appeared conscience of there choice of diction, however I made it clear that as long as anonymity is kept, their organization will not be put at risk based on their opinions of the government. Egyptians were not put at risk simply through my interviewing process. What would put subjects at risk is if there was reckless planning of the interview setting. This would only feel “risky” for individuals from the Youth movement, which is why they interviewed in low-key venues such as a cafe. Small, less public, privately owned cafés were a common setting for discussion and the interview process. The most vital

aspect of the interview process is that subjects were aware of *why* I am conducting this research. This is vital because, firstly, interviewees wanted to know my intentions- particularly during a difficult, transitional, volatile time in Egypt's history, and especially if it will include controversially charged discussions. The intention was to make all subjects aware that they, and their affiliations, have a communal stake in creating a stronger nation post-Mubarak. The interview process allowed members of various groups the opportunity to express their own beliefs, reservations and hopes, their own organization's relationships with other social groups, as well as the intentions of powerful forces within the state and civil society. By obtaining this research and the subject's responses, future anthropologists, and anthropologists alike, will find it easier to distinguish the future trajectory of Egypt as an organized state, as a community of civil society, and governing entity.

Potential Risks and Benefits to Subjects

Potential risks to subjects are based around political interests and whether they are correctly representing the organization the subject represents. For international NGOs and USAID, there is a minimum to the risk they are subject to. Their highest risks are centered on discomfort through the asking of politically charged questions. Though they can voluntarily skip a question, loss of confidentiality can also be at risk for these subjects in case they are replying to a question independently of their organization's beliefs. Local NGOs and members of the youth coalition are subject to the most potential risk during this research. As native Egyptians, they are at risk of offending the government, discomfort of interview could lead to a feeling of losing confidentiality, furthermore, even the educated Egyptian class are subjected to some form of social or

political marginalization. Questioning local NGOs on their opinions of governmental intervention and the USAID program would certainly help to create a charged conversation if not handled correctly. My questioning was worded sensitively and in ways that would be straightforward so that no misunderstandings or speculations were made based on heavily charged diction. Local organizations also have governmental influences lending to more reason why the questioning process had to be worked out thoroughly. It was important not to have assumptions within the questioning process. My questions inquired about relationships with other social forces, and the subject chose to elaborate on that accordingly. Also, much of the local urban population, in particular “active” individuals, did not seem to be scared, ashamed or discomforted by speaking openly about the government-within reason. This is a brand new development, since the revolution, that had the potential of changing on a case-by-case basis. Other individuals that could have been subjected to potential risks were my informants, many of whom I am personally connected. These informants, family friends, colleagues, and friends assisted with collecting some of the subject interviewees among the several parties that were interviewed. Though they were not as involved in any part of the interviewing process, it is vital that their anonymity is kept unless noted otherwise.

In general, I hope that all subjects benefited from the interview process. Relationships were successfully built throughout the interview process, which is why the procedure is that critical. Every interview strived for a comfortable, casual, and honest atmosphere between the interviewee and myself. The subject from USAID did not overly benefit from the interview because of a strong ideological system that they have in place. Subjects who work for international and local NGOs will benefit from the interview

process simply as an interesting interview, one that will allow them to be reflective on their work and the surrounding community. Youth members of the ‘street’ can potentially benefit through the networking opportunity that will be presented. In general I want more from them than I will be able to provide to them, however, the interview process will benefit these individuals for the sake of reflecting on their present and future plans for civic action. As far as actual physical costs for subjects, they are minimal. Most of the costs will be in the form of time. I will make an effort for every interview to do the majority of traveling in order to reach the interviewees preferred area of Cairo.

Minimization of Potential Risk

As stated previously, there were potential risks and benefits that subjects could experience if the interviews occurred without the necessary briefing and questioning procedure. Subjects who have the protection of organizations, particularly NGOs and USAID, dealt with much less risk based on institutional protection. The members of these organizations also may benefit the least from the interview process because of their class and economic status. Subjects who have little to zero backing of organizations and are street protest participants of the Youth coalition were the highest potential risk but still benefit from the experience of speaking their mind and having someone listen. I believe this is a benefit because the work of the “activists” continues to bring awareness and advocacy to the original goals of the revolution. The risk involving these subjects were minimized firstly, by presenting a necessary briefing of why I am asking questions while providing necessary background information of myself in order to insure transparency. Secondly, subjects were notified that their answers would be anonymous based on preference and that they are voluntarily answering questions. Thirdly, I tried to stay away

from group discussions of any kind because of peer pressure, not only to say the correct statements but also to avoid any sort of political pressure that individuals feel from one another. Because there is a high source of political tension, the interview process was preferably based around one on one casual conversation so that subjects felt comfortable to speak their opinions.

Positives, Limitations and Areas Missed

There were several limitations during the research process that I will address here. Firstly, the limited time for research is a concern. I spent a total of three and a half months conducting interviews and obtaining research in Egypt and I believe with more time some limitations could have been avoided. Specifically in the case of the number of interviews conducted, reaching out to other relevant social forces of society, and spending more time obtaining interviews out of the country's capital would have ensured an increase in depth and reflexivity of this anthropological study. Secondly, I was unable to reach any members of political society as I had originally intended. I could not organize interviews with members of the military due to the current state of affairs. Their voice and opinion of civil society would have been useful. Another limitation was the language and ethnicity barrier. Though this was rarely an issue, the fact that I am an Egyptian of mixed descent rather than full-blooded may inevitably attributed to a few setbacks. Trust, a valuable mechanism between the interviewee and interviewer, did not turn out to be serious issue. Although being ethnically half-American (Caucasian) in my opinion resulted in specific interviewees feeling uneasy about carrying on a conversation on their political discourse. Moreover, in order to ensure the one hundred percent correct use and translation of Egyptian Arabic a friend and fluent speaker accompanied me

during a few interviews that were conducted only in Arabic. While I interviewed individuals in Arabic on my own, I still felt it to be important to ensure there would be no linguistic miscues during the interview process, although I was concerned another individual with me would add anxiety.

A few members of local NGOs also were not interested in being interviewed or discussing civil society's role within the state. An example of this is in my attempt to reach out to priests from the Coptic Church. I eventually interviewed six members of the Coptic Orthodox church however I spent the majority of my time ensuring them that recordings and identities would not be exposed to the public, as they rightfully appeared skeptical about presenting their political opinions to anyone let alone someone of mixed descent. Another limitation was that I attempted to reach several members of the U.S. State Department in Egypt and was rejected unanimously. I continue to feel curious about why members of a foreign entity happened to be the least transparent. Lastly, this thesis is meant to describe civil society in Egypt as a whole; however none of the conducted interviews were located outside of Egypt's major urban centers of Cairo and Alexandria. While most NGOs and social forces of "formal" civil society are based out of Egypt's urban centers there are certainly active elements of their work in rural areas. Also, 'informal' civil society is extremely active in less urban regions of the nation, in particular for the causes of the Nubian population in Upper Egypt as well as the Bedouin population in the Sinai Peninsula.

While there were several limitations, the research process produced many positive results. Firstly, I was introduced to wonderful people using the snowball effect. Some interviewees were able to facilitate meetings for myself with other members of their

organization or of another organization. Fortunately, initial interviewees were considerate and introduced me to highly relevant and active individuals who maintained a rich, qualitative understanding of Egyptian civil society and roles of major CSOs. The interview process also provides excellent contacts post-research for when I am back in the country. Finally, another positive is that although not all the interviews conducted were utilized for this paper, all the results had an ultimate effect on the re-conceptualizing of civil society. Besides the social forces discussed throughout the analysis I interviewed religious institutions (members of both the Mosque and the Church), staff members from the United Nations Development Program in Cairo, as well as a member of the MB. The interviews were relevant and provided useful insight and future references.

Next, this section will highlight several topics that were avoided throughout this thesis for several reasons. No reason however was for the sole purpose of ignoring important issues; rather my research did not permit the inclusion of specific topics due to time constraints and the limited number of interviews. Firstly, activists are not the sole form of pure civil society though they are a primary example and source of civil society work. Labor unions, which were not discussed in my research, have an extremely influential role in Egyptian society, as they are active in applying pressure on the private sector and government. There are state run and independent labor unions that are especially vital in the recent social movements throughout Egypt. Factory workers are utilized for mass protests and are capable of severely crippling state owned industries. Labor unions are quite possibly the necessary force for destabilizing and applying pressure on the government pre and post revolution. Additionally there are artists, political cartoonists, anarchists and many small, informal but organized groups that take

pride in challenging the state in a less direct manner. Graffiti artists for example provide the story of the movement on public wall space throughout Cairo and on most state-owned buildings. Graffiti plays a key role in taking up public space to spread a message to all who can see it. Even if the state washes away anti-government graffiti, there is always someone who will repaint another message.

I failed to mention the role of religious institutions on civil society. The members of these religious institutions provided useful information during the interviews; however, it was clear that they tried to exclude themselves from the political realm. They are active in society and certainly provide elements of financial, moral, and religious support to their constituents. Mosques and Churches still encourage individuals to take part in nation's political process but are clearly not interested in challenging government. Priests and Sheikhs use their influence to encourage positive change; nevertheless, these institutions are more concerned about stability, safety, and security for their constituents-particularly for the minority of Christians. During my sole interview with a member of the formerly illegal Muslim Brotherhood, civil society was referenced using dual definitions. In one way the doctor understood civil society as "activity and mobilization on the ground" until civil society became a reference for the "civil" state that will come to fruition under the rule of the MB. Either way, it is important to reference other differing contexts of the use of the term civil society outside of how I have previously described misinterpretations of the term. Lastly, I was unable to discuss the heavy influence the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has had on 'informal' civil society which I consider to be legitimate civil society. The MB, over the past decades, has developed a strong following among lower-income constituents. Their methods include providing

social services in the form of health and education, religious teachings, and charity. The MB formerly associated in “the street” and successfully garnered support by large portions of the population due to the services they provide. Since the government had been terrible at providing services, the MB for some time received praise and support for their civil society work. However, it is worth noting that receiving support through services to the poor can be interpreted as a form of manipulation. This can be seen as manipulation due to the MB’s ascendance to power following the uprising and their ability to receive votes from the rural, low-income constituents that they served. Furthermore this form of civil society work is similar to the concept of charity and provides a short-term solution. Their inclusion in this research is due to their newly created role of leading government and their now dominance of political society.

Analysis: Not what it seems

Beginning on the 25th of January 2011, something groundbreaking, some may call earth, or state, and even socio-politically shattering happened; it was surreal. But in fact this was the realest occurrence that happened in greater Cairo, Alexandria, and many surrounding cities, since I cannot even recall, or at least since fast-food delivery became

possible. An event, or a string of events, rather a movement exponentially erupted throughout the plethora of nook and cranny streets of Egyptian cities everywhere, resembling the pumping of a thousand blood vessels reaching the heart or meeting place. Some say they could not have, in their wildest dreams, believed this was possible; others simply give the facts behind why the largest movement of civic engagement and protest against the state since Saad Zaghloul in 1919, was happening, or depending on whom you speak with, is still happening. Just months earlier, the people of Tunisia rose up in acts of civil disobedience in a cry for ‘a better life’ with the result of the toppling of ex-President Ben Ali, who when given the chance, fled to Saudi Arabia with his family and his tail between his legs. Was this what Egyptians wanted? I mean who knows what anyone wants when a president is deified as a Pharaoh, has the backing of a ‘popular’ military dictatorship, managed to continuously rule for thirty years, and appeared more concerned about retaining the executive, legislative, and judicial power within his military trained fist clench rather than do his best to... Apologies, here I am venting and rambling, but I have a point. What exactly was it that allowed for such a fervent, socio-economically diverse collective of individuals to organize such grand events, the main-event of our generation, a political storm following three decades of relatively calm waves of complacency? And more importantly, who are these people? Who are they affiliated with? Who do they represent? Is this Egyptian civil society at it’s finest? Who is part of civil society and who is not? And come to think about it where were the NGOs, the CSOs, the donors offering funds, the assistance from civil society in order to counter-balance the political chaos, and the government’s work, or lack thereof?

One year later, over one thousand Egyptian deaths, even more injuries, supposed sectarian violence, state sponsored violence, ousting of Hosni Mubarak along with his

National Democratic Party, and the state is still in disarray. I found myself attending the one-year anniversary of the revolution in the epicenter of Cairo, Tahrir Square. Nearly one million strong in the country's capital and the revolution felt all but finished. The scent of teargas was not available to torment civilians, the images of police and military were non-existent; the passionate, revolutionary spirit felt fresh- as if I had never been in the U.S. studying the year before. While some groups treated the day as a time to celebrate, many felt that the trials and tribulations of Egyptian citizens were beginning to seem like a lost cause, as if the revolution had not been realized. Besides the ousting of Mubarak and members of his authoritarian regime, they were right, much had gone unchanged.

The post-revolution era undoubtedly opened the door wide open for this project, as my interviewees are conducted with controversial and influential members of society. It just so happens that people want to talk now, a lot. It's not that this wasn't the case before; on the contrary, Egyptians are highly social. However, the political realm has always been a sector of society to be set aside, to not question in fear of going mad over the illogical leadership that has ensued the past several decades. I set out to my home country with a question in mind. This question needed to be asked, discussed, and internalized, but by whom?

For this section, and the ultimate purpose of my research, I provide the analytical framework for answering THE question of interest- what civil society is in Egypt. Civil society is an inevitable keyword in the globalizing process of 'democratization', whether through policy or academia. The term civil society has developed into a theoretically integral aspect of "democracy" as well as for describing "the local". It is often believed that empowering civil society is equivalent to empowering 'the local', with the hope that

seeds for democracy are planted. This analytical process will explore the ambiguity of civil society, particularly in the case of Egypt, and will discuss the conceptualizing of such a socially and politically charged term. By presenting my research findings, which I conducted throughout Cairo and includes the voices of various dominating social forces of the state and supposed civil society, I hope to bring to light the questions surrounding what Egyptian civil society is, especially if it is indeed a policy tool for the democratization process. I had the opportunity to reach several influential members of so-called civil society, asking them similar questions on what their opinions were of the sector, whether they were apart of it, the importance of it in Egypt, while interlinking the political context of the revolution and the newly founded government.

I will discuss and analyze the varying opinions on what Egyptian civil society while utilizing several narratives from the interviews I conducted with what I consider to be the major social forces of this sector. These social forces are have the most influence on civil society and include the following groups, international NGOs (INGOs), local NGOs, foreign governments or affiliates (Aid, Development contractors), and a group of activists that represent, more or less, “the street”. Interviews were also conducted with members of religious institutions as well as with a member of the MB though their responses will be utilized differently. The second section will also discuss the affiliation between the previous groups that I have mentioned and the Egyptian government. Finally, the final section of my analysis will explore and discuss a re-conceptualization of Egyptian civil society, with the help of James Ferguson, while presenting an original civil society diagram/model.

Egyptian Civil Society’s thoughts on Egyptian Civil Society

Here I present my findings on what CSO's, governmental affiliates, informal organizations and unaffiliated, independent members of 'the street' believe to be civil society. This is an important finding for the overall discussion on Egyptian civil society, as you will find that there is indeed an identity crisis that needs sorting, and whom better to debate the topic than with influential members or affiliates of the supposed Egyptian civil society sector. Voices from within the state are the most vital, if not knowledgeable, however, keep in mind the traditional, theoretical definition of civil society while analyzing the functions of civil society organizations in reality and in practice.

a. International NGO's

What do prominent international NGOs think is civil society, and do they believe their own organizations are a part of it? I was able to reach the staff of a few organizations based in Cairo but that do a majority of their work in rural Egypt, namely, CARE Egypt, Plan Egypt, and Relief International. Through an interview process, which often took place at the organization's headquarters, I received the opinions of several high-ranking staff members on what they thought of Egyptian civil society, how they were involved with it, and whether they consider themselves to be a part of it. What seems to be a fairly simple and straightforward question has obviously opened the doors to several deeper issues, mostly being an identity confusion crisis. Responses from this mixed group of men and women either appear to be specific, rehearsed definitions of what civil society is in theory, or, they provide an answer that reflects confusion in their own belief of this sector of society.

CARE, based in Cairo for approximately sixty-five years, emerged in Egypt back in the early era of ‘development and cooperation’ between the west and ‘developing’ nations. The organization’s interests began due to the humanitarian crisis in Palestine, and later evolving to the long-term, sustainable development agenda. Over the past few decades CARE has grown to become a partnership organization that looks to play an intermediary role for other local partners, as “typically local partners will do between twenty five percent and seventy percent of the work, depending on their strengths and objectives”, the country director explained. They work in four separate programs on women’s rights, governance, agriculture and natural resources, and female education with the primary focus being on women and youth. The man I spoke to in particular is the office’s country director, meaning he runs the organization and is the primary resource for the international headquarters. He was an extremely kind hearted American man who lived in Cairo as a child and came back to work later in his life and has continued to do so for some time. I then proceeded to ask him the big question, what does this development professional think is Egyptian civil society?

“I really question what a lot of Egyptian NGOs, and CDOs (community development organizations), CDA’s, I really question whether many of those organizations are really civil society. Often they have a founding member, they’re more a charitable organization at the local level, so they don’t really represent anybody, they don’t do any lobbying or advocacy, they collect food for people, they do various small projects for local communities, but often it is headed by a single person. They are staffed by volunteers, there is nothing particularly sustainable about it, and when the money runs out or the person loses interest, the CDO folds. So civil society in Egypt, I would say is pretty weak. I’d say it’s composed of professional NGOs who are self-sustaining and have resources, through donors (private or institutional) or their own resources, to carry on programs. Also international NGOs, lobby advocacy groups, such as women’s rights groups, environmental groups, and children’s rights groups. It’s a very small group in Egypt, real civil society, because my definition would be a group that is formed on a permanent basis that represents a certain constituency, and

works on different levels to support that constituency. Often it would be a constituency that doesn't have a voice somehow. It doesn't have to be, but I think that the idea of true civil society is to represent people, and to act as a bridge between the government and local people in some area or some areas. And in Egypt, that doesn't happen very often. Some international NGOs, larger national NGOs, and larger Local NGOs would be my narrow definition of civil society. Concerning charity organizations, are they really civil society? To me, you don't want to make the definition too broad because then it just becomes nothing. The other problem here with civil society is that the government regulates and controls all national NGOs very tightly. So when they are actually giving money to local NGOs, which they actually do to every NGO that is registered with the Ministry of Social Development gets money from the ministry, so therefore it is very questionable... if that is the money that enables them to survive, then they cannot be civil society and instead are actually arms of the government."

By the time he was finished answering the question we both seemed to express confusion, he didn't know if I wanted more out of the answer or whether he should just keep exploring the idea. His response reflects the many problems I mentioned previously. Firstly, that the diluting and broad usage of civil society will certainly weaken the sector, secondly, that he questions whether organizations posing as civil society are really civil society, thirdly, that international NGOs, or transnational organizations, should be included as a part of Egyptian civil society, and lastly, that nearly all formal local NGOs are regulated tightly- which includes the funds that they are able to receive from donors, therefore essentially existing as a governmental non-governmental organization. In response to my question of whether CARE was a part of Egyptian civil society, he responded, "We try very hard to be part of civil society... yes we say we are. I'm biased of course." This point would confirm that he believes that member international organizations of the transnational sector are at the same time a valuable member of Egyptian civil society. Being my first interview with an international organization, I figured responses would be rather similar, with different variations of

course. However my initial thoughts did not hold true as I continued on to conduct the next interview with PLAN Egypt's country director.

Plan Egypt is an international NGO that works in seventy different countries. Their programs, like CARE, are committed to child and women development, active citizenship, and community organization. Speaking with the country director, Edward, who is also an American, there were some differing opinions to that of CARE. When I asked him to define Egyptian civil society for me, he responded by saying,

“It's the space that's not government, but also not business or private sector. If you are working in a big business that's not civil society. But they are promoting the concept of citizenship more than civil society because citizens that are in government might actually be Muslim Brotherhood, and if you work in a business like Google, and afterhours you are on Tahrir square. So, whether you are organized or not, this idea of citizenship and how rights are respected in a country is another concept. But for us, civil society is still the most common term for allowing people to associate, organize, around their own issues, as well as advocate for minority based issues.”

On whether Plan Egypt is a part of Egyptian Civil society he quickly proclaimed that they are not, instead he asserted, “Ok, as an international NGO, we support local civil society but we are not actually part of it, because almost by definition civil society is indigenous. We are not even too sure on how to define ourselves, but we are here to support civil society.” He, and the mission of Plan Egypt, is to strengthen civil society, not to be a part of it. He makes it clear that Egyptian civil society must be inherently Egyptian or indigenous. This brings several intriguing thoughts to mind: how can these organizations strengthen civil society, as if to say they are “above” or “outside” of the sphere and are simply mechanics working to fix the problem? They have a local presence, hire Egyptian nationals, and receive enough funding from their donors to carry out their work in a

sustainable fashion, and yet they seem to believe they are outside of this realm, as if they only provide positive assistance. By the time I completed the second interview with the international NGO sector, I realized that I heard two different responses to what civil society is in Egypt, and furthermore, civil society was defined again from a broad to a specific form: “promoting citizenship to the space where people are allowed to associate and organize.” However, this definition can be misleading because if Egyptian civil society is a place where people are allowed to “associate, and organize around their own issues”, then how is it that an international NGO is able to strengthen this sector? By promoting citizenship, and building capacity of local organizations, etc. this implies that Egyptians are incapable of organizing themselves, besides a lack of funding, this is not necessarily the case.

Relief International, based in Cairo, is a newly established international organization that I was able to organize an interview with. The interview consisted of four Egyptian staff members, two men and two women, including the country director. They were open, transparent and invited me in to their apartment style office with open arms to meet with the vital members of their staff. All four members, throughout the duration of the interview were opinionated, knowledgeable, experienced, and at times disagreed over what constituted as Egyptian civil society. When I went ahead and asked them their opinion on what civil society in Egypt was, they each provided elaborate responses and plenty more than the previous interviews. Still, the confusion over what appears to be a commonly used phrase and question, “what is Egyptian civil society?” is perhaps the central catalyst for my thesis inquiries. This extremely helpful group of Egyptian development workers provided a wide array of examples of the varying levels

of civil society, yet, debated over what constitutes as a CSO and what CSO's do as Egyptian civil society immediately took over the discussion.

The country director began by saying:

“Let me start, I would say civil society are not government, not military, and not business. That is civil society for me, it is not a government organization, business orientated or military.”

A simple yet elegant reply was to be expected from the elder leader in the office.

Immediately after, the second man responded quickly and quietly by saying,

“It is a medium for community participation, it is sometimes organized and sometimes not. It can be a movement, or a popular committee, or a group of people that have a purpose for action, or an organization.”

He was then quick to add that he would *“like to differentiate that charitable organizations, mostly religious- Muslim or Christian- and sometimes secular work, there are human rights organizations, there are syndicates, they are all doing different work but they are all considered part of Egyptian civil society. Speaking about Egyptian civil society I have not mentioned any INGOs. INGOs are contributing to Egyptian civil society financially, technically, and capacity building but most probably as INGOs work differently- empowering civil society, empowering local groups, for them to help local groups and communities. UN is civil society, USAID is civil society, for us they are not Egyptian government, they are not local NGOs, they are Egyptian NGOs- there are different categories but we can consider them as catalysts.”*

Eager to jump an experienced development worker, she said, *“Organizations that are not military, government, or business. However in Egypt there are heavily regulated organizations by the government. Although they are not government, every step everything inside is very much looked at by government so they are not as free as other CSOs in other countries- so there is a strong government presence whether we like it or not and most CSOs are on the side of charitable organizations, for many of them they don't know the difference between charity work, development work, or political work, or rights based. So for me civil society in Egypt, there biggest problem is not that we don't have one, we have one of the largest presence of Civil society organizations its more of a question of how the government controls them, what they are actually working in, and their understanding of what they should be able to do as civil society.”*

After pausing shortly she came back to add that her personal opinion was that

“USAID is not civil society, that's pure government and it is part of the state department so it's purely political, it's here for political reasons so it's very

subject to what it wants to do. So in my personal opinion is it's doing things for civil society but its jurisdiction is political. In 2006 when it became part of the state department, it's no longer separated from the political agenda of the country- and that was a big change for USAID in the world."

With little else to say afterwards, the fourth employee chose to move on to the next question, saying she agreed with all that was said by her previous colleague. Still, their responses continued to reflect the essential debate of who is a part of civil society. The debate over whether USAID was a member of Egyptian civil society is clearly relevant as they fund and sustain several international and local organizations. To say that they were not a member of civil society would be questionable as they are providing the necessary funds to the organizations they choose- but this is all wrong. They are a part of the U.S. government. USAID funds are guided by the agenda of the U.S. state department and they come from the pockets of American taxpayers. They cannot possibly be considered Egyptian civil society even though they fund a large portion of it. One thing is clear, each response included a broad, all encompassing definition of civil society before each became hyper specific, even differentiating charity organizations (a vast portion of supposed CSO's) from the sector.

Mohsen went on and explained, *"There was a study issued on the year 2000 by an American living in Egypt, his name is Mr. Robert LaTowsky. He did a study about CSO's and divided them into three sectors- primary (grassroots), intermediary, and tertiary sectors. It is a very nice study, and I recommend it."* Mr. Robert LaTowsky compartmentalized the NGO sector in Egypt. The primary NGOs are considered grassroots and are the organizations dealing first hand in providing services. Intermediary NGOs, which are most INGOs, are organizations that don't carry out services themselves, instead they work alongside primary NGOs and provide the necessary

financial, technical assistance. INGOs no longer are the direct provider of services to the local people. Thirdly, tertiary NGOs are made up of advocacy groups and CSO's that are providing awareness of human rights and other relevant social issues. He was an intriguing and helpful character although his work was mainly focused on the NGO sector as a whole, leaving out many of the organizations that are informal and un-registered.

Finally, I was able to reach and interview a veteran development worker in Egypt, an American who has spent time working for several non-profits in Egypt, Dan Coster. With the snowball effect able produce most of my interviews; Dan was one who was willing and able to introduce me to colleagues in different CSO's. In the comfort of his apartment flat I went ahead and asked him the golden question. He responded first by saying that the:

“Organizations I’ve directly worked with in this country have been Care, Care International, RTI (Research Triangle International), and AIR (American Institute for Research). So all three organizations are international in nature and therefore from what I’ve said previously, I do not consider them as civil society organizations. But, I consider them integral to strengthening civil society in Egypt.”

He then jumped at the opportunity to define civil society in Egypt, saying:

“Purely, civil society, I feel is ownership. Could be at a community or district, national, levels. Civil society is ownership, its accountability, and holding the government accountable; and ownership in its pure stage needs to be local. So you’ve got international players and you’ve got UN players, all kinds of stakeholders in the strength of civil society, but what is civil society? I think its local organizations. I have been working with the community level. But to sustain things at the community level, but to sustain at this level, obviously the environment is linked to government. CSOs are organizations and people of influence, organizations that are influential and local in nature, and that work from the community to district or governorate or to the national level. Harnessing people’s interests, their demands, exerting their influence on government so that they can provide services.”

Following his response, I asked him if to be part of civil society you have to be a local?

And what line divides you from being a part of civil society or not? He retorted by saying:

“Well I think, International entities, their mandate is things like poverty alleviation, human dignity, bringing marginalized people up. But the way they do that is through, their strategy, is to implement projects that are linked to their long-term strategy. I see these entities they enter life and then they exit, in other words they serve as a catalyst. I don’t think that if these organizations are part of civil society that means they’re the ones that need to change things. I think they are change organizations but what they do is they enable local populations to change things, so that when they exit, if there’s nothing sustained upon their leaving, and then I’d think that it’s a big waist of time. If they’re the ones who are responsible for the long term, they are responsible to be a catalyst and enable organizations, so that when they leave, the people can demand and hold power and government accountable. So if you take your eye off of that ball and you say ‘no we are the civil society organizations and we make change’ rather than being the catalyst, alright well you’ll make some change but I don’t think it will be half as sustainable or half as long term impactful as it needs to be.”

Making a compelling argument, Dan explained the difference between catalyst organizations that empower and help develop civil society and actual Egyptian CSOs.

While indeed a necessary differentiation, his response still emphasized the influence that international entities have on the local population with the strategy and agenda of the foreign donor. Again, civil society is referred to as being constructed from “abroad” or from “outside of the state” as “catalyst” organizations, which are not CSOs but work to empower CSOs.

What is clear from these international NGO workers is that they are not completely sure who or what makes up Egyptian civil society. Certain interviewees were adamant about considering their respective organizations as Egyptian civil society and others felt their organization worked from outside to strengthen civil society. Either way

there is divided responses among the international NGO community as these organizations emphasize “locality”, being “indigenous”, and holding government accountable, functions that INGOs do not necessarily commit to.

b. Local NGO

Now lets look at the opinions of a few members of local NGOs and discuss what they had to say on civil society. The first Egyptian NGO that I was able to meet through a family connection is Masr Al Kheir. In a particularly professional setting, I interviewed the director of fundraising of the organization along with a sidekick of his, who either had no title or forgot to mention it. This NGO is a large non-profit organization that works in a wide range of development fields for the betterment of the Egyptian people. This organization is certainly a leader in their field as they are able to receive funds locally, to sustain themselves, and are widely visible in the media with a commercial presence. Their message is broad and all encompassing, they want to “develop people...improve the socio economic status of individuals and groups” as the two gentleman I met with proclaimed. However, it is difficult to compare this NGO to other local NGOs due to the difference in size, capacity, and funds. In many cases Masr al Kheir is one of handful sustainable organizations of this size, but do they function in a civil society dominated by transnational organizations and government restriction? The answer is yes. I asked both of them what they thought of civil society in Egypt and whether they believe they are a part of it. Needless to say I received a limited response. This is what they said:

“M1: “Anything but the government... multi-national companies, it’s like an NGO for the welfare of society.”

M2: “I look at it the same, anyone that is concerned with the development of humanity.”

On whether they considered themselves to be a part of civil society:

“M1 and M2: Yes, we are a leading NGO.”

They considered all of society, outside of the government, that was concerned for the development of Egypt and humanity as a whole. Quite a wide range to choose from, what is the indicator for “concern of humanity”. We all individually care about society to a certain level, with exceptions of course, however how do we know CSO’s are conducting the necessary functions of civil society and vouching for Egyptian society? Additionally, they seemed to include the business sector into civil society, which was not uncommon to find amongst my research, although it is questionable to me how developed the practices of corporate social responsibility are amongst the private sector. Similarly, the private sector provides limited funding, on a whole, to civil society. Still, I will agree that for many organizations, funding is funding and can be the difference to whether an organization can continue functioning or not. Ultimately, it was a limited response to the civil society question, indicating the similar trend of this strange ambiguity of a sector that has received millions of dollars domestically and abroad, mostly abroad, to develop the very sector we find ourselves lost in.

The next local NGO worker I was fortunate to interview works for an organization called Education for Employment in Egypt. Meeting with this young woman, in her mid twenties, was indeed a refreshing change of pace from the older generation I had been meeting with consistently for months. She gladly went right into the discussion on civil society saying:

“Civil society is public opinion, or the street, as part of civil society. NGOs definitely, the social forces that may not always be organized, for example certain

minorities, Christians, women, entities that cohesively represent a certain voice in society but aren't always organized, I think they factor in. So I think civil society is the social balance to the politics of government, I kind of think of their role as in the socio-economic sphere."

Her answer remained consistent with other responses though she brings up some interesting points. Firstly, she mentions "the street" and "entities that cohesively represent a certain voice in society but aren't always organized"- it seems to me that she is, rightfully, including much of civil society that may not be represented by CSOs, or the informal sector. Secondly, she mentions that civil society is "the social balance to politics of government" working mainly in the socio-economic sphere as she refers to the sector's role in development and improving socio-economic status of individuals and groups. Still, in the eyes of local NGO workers, one can see how these responses are often outside of the political realm and mainly concerned with economic development, much like the work of charity organizations and most NGOs both local and international. Then I asked her if she considered her organization to be a part of Egyptian civil society along with whether for-profit organizations are civil society. She quickly responded saying,

"Yes definitely. I think its interesting because we are noticing a shift in Egypt and globally towards social entrepreneurship, social finance, CSR, and I think that is making for profit businesses more part of civil society but I think in of in itself not necessarily."

Again, she makes it clear that the private sector has a role to play within civil society. This is certainly true considering the lack in funding and overall capacity for CSOs, still, there seems to be a trend that civil society is less involved in political development as it is with economic development.

Local NGOs, particularly those I have interviewed, seem to rely their focus on the socio-economic arena to avoid heavy government regulation. There are charity organizations, those interested in education and health services, corporate social responsibility, and a limited number of locally registered NGOs outside of this realm. They avoid political development and have little interest in challenging government, knowing that their organization's existence relies on consent from government, or political society. While the work of these organizations can be successful with plenty of positive results, it appears that NGOs will always be employed within the socio-economic sector because of deteriorating economic conditions, rather than lobbying and challenging the government or political status-quo (arguably the entity to blame for socio-economic deterioration).

c. Foreign Governments

In a fortunate circumstance, I was finally able to reach a member of the U.S. government, more specifically a member of USAID, a primary donor for CSO's in Egypt. USAID is funded by American taxpayers and works according to the agenda and interests of the U.S. state department. Basically they are a full-fledged foreign government organization that has had an influential hand in the development field as well as Egyptian civil society. Many organizations could not survive without the funding received from USAID.

On a this hot summer afternoon, a day after the supposed 'crisis' involving protesters at the U.S. Embassy on the anniversary of the September 11th attacks, I met a high ranking official in the Democracy and Governance sector of USAID. We intended for the interview to convene within the U.S. compound, which looks like a fortress and is

one of the largest USAID headquarters worldwide, however they would not allow me to bring my cell phone or recording equipment. Instead we went for a walk, perhaps fittingly to the Cinnabon around the corner to discuss the matters of Egyptian civil society.

I asked him what he thought of Egyptian civil society, whether he considered international NGOs to be Egyptian civil society, and ultimately ended with whether USAID, with all the funding they give to Egyptian civil society, should be considered to be a part of that sector (mostly for laughs).

“Well, by definition it’s any non-governmental actor. So, it starts on community organizations, and just a bunch of people getting together for whatever reason, whether religious or non religious, and it goes all the way up to the most organized civil society organizations that have funds from 10 different donors that have implementing for 50 years. And of course there are international organizations as well that are falling into those categories. And there are other CSO’s in areas that are involved in political areas or close to political areas, community empowerment, human rights, and you have other organizations that are very non-political, apolitical and they are focused on service delivery, health, education, you know.”

On whether he considers international organizations to be a part of Egyptian civil society:

“Yeah, some people do and some people don’t. It is strange, it’s the basic question of what is civil society, so many different interpretations, and so when you start off with that premise being so different, it’s hard to then draw some firm conclusions, because if everybody starts at a different premise and then they go off in a different direction.”

On whether he considers USAID to be any part of Egyptian civil society?

“No, we don’t consider ourselves a part of Egyptian civil society, I mean it is a part of the United States government, and so what USAID’s position is in both Egypt and around the world is that civil society organizations as well as inside the US can play a vital role in helping to provide services to people, to help empower people, to build their capacity, to meet basic needs of human beings and of advancing civil society in various ways. So, we ourselves are trying to help facilitate that but we’re not part of that. Of course our role has been highly controversial.”

USAID is not a member of Egyptian civil society though the sector receives heavy funding from them. This of course has implications as their funding is used as a tool to steer or guide the nation in their direction, as they believe that empowering civil society results in democratization. However, many organizations that receive their funding will not perform the function of civil society, for instance holding government accountable. Rather, it appears that USAID is content “buying” off organizations that will act as civil society instead of actually empowering civil society.

Fortunately, I was able to interview two development contractors in Egypt that are employed by mostly for-profit development companies that work and implement USAID projects. Both have worked for several years with a number of organizations in Egypt, international NGOs and for-profit development companies that ultimately implement USAID projects in various socio-economic areas.

First we have Pete, an American development contractor who happened to be without work at the time of the interview. He was open and helpful during the interview even when dealing with several controversial questions. I asked him what he considered to be civil society, and quite simply, he wasn’t sure.

“That’s why I had to ask because I’m not quite sure. I mean all the companies for profit have an effect on society, they are big, they are here, and regardless of what they are doing with their profits they definitely have an effect on society. Civil society I mean I would take out the government I guess, but I would include for-profit companies.”

Next I spoke with another development contractor who now works as a development consultant in various economic fields. This was his response when I asked him to explain to me Egyptian civil society:

“To me civil society is, typically, non-governmental organizations that work in anything from classic development activities that could be related to education, literacy, agriculture, public health issues, and other issues that are important to society outside the realm of the formal government arena. Community groups, like-minded groups that come together and focus on issues.”

Then he responded to my question regarding whether his work is part of civil society, saying:

“We’ve worked with Egyptian organizations that you can say are part of civil society, in a broad sense. For example, we work with associations frequently. Those associations can be small farmer associations, which are organized under the civil society law- under the ministry of social affairs (or solidarity). Those are community organizations focusing on how they can work together for the benefit of all the farmers involved to make more money through the production of better fruits and vegetables. Other colleagues work with how they can manage and strengthen that association so that they can better serve its members of the community. In the past I’ve worked with the Egyptian Chefs association who work in hotels, resorts, restaurants. But again, around this mission of professional development, to help chefs be better chefs- the other one was to help farmers be better farmers. That also included technical assistance with the association so that it could better manage itself and better serve its members.”

Speaking with these development contractors led me to a few relevant points. One point is that the definition of civil society in Egypt continues to be difficult to define. One of them wasn’t sure how to define it by admitting his lack of knowledge of the sector. The second interview indicates that when his company does work with civil society it is focused entirely in the socio-economic realm, primarily promoting neoliberal economic principles (i.e. Structural adjustment programs) of the ‘West’, WB, and IMF.

d. Activists and Initiatives

Next on the list of interviewees comes a group of individuals who find themselves involved in several areas tied to “the local”. They are the ones who work informally, mostly with little funding beyond what they are able to muster from their side jobs, without an office, without a financial motive, and with the intention of challenging a

government that has made life difficult in a multitude of areas for the majority of the population. This group of men and women were active in the streets surrounding Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the Egyptian revolution in Cairo. They were active in organizing, advocacy, micro-management, poster making, providing food, cleaning streets, commemorating the martyrs, and eventually becoming involved with the growing political movements that in some cases were born in Tahrir. The best way to describe them is as “activists”, they work according to the heartbeat of ‘the street’ they were not originally politically affiliated though several have taken on inclusive, popular agendas and believe all members of society deserve their rights. Some of them have crossed paths with large youth movements such as, April 6th movement, Kefaya, Revolutionary Youth, and many more. Some have taken beatings or seen their comrades beaten at the hands of security forces, others have witnessed attacks on them by rivaling political forces, some spent time in jail and others spend their time organizing amongst their peers. Beginning within six or seven years prior to the revolution up until the post-revolution era, their work has been never-ending and is no less important. The time is now for this group of people who are often the closest to reality when it comes to understanding and living within an eroded political, social, and economic sphere. They themselves and their friends, family, etc. are victims, they are the closest to understanding the importance of the revolution, the need to continue challenging government, and that they are not the same civil society as the ones they have heard of- the ones that receive millions of dollars in funding, support from foreign governments, and have high-rise corporate offices arranging development initiatives. They are trying to develop the people around them,

with constant discussion, protest marches, and face-to-face lobbying amongst their detractors.

One man I spoke with I met on the one-year anniversary of the revolution in Tahrir square. His name is Mo and at first glance he appeared to be a leader, standing at the front of a large tent that him and his ‘colleagues’ assembled, with the names and photos of the martyrs, those who had passed, during the revolution. He was micro-managing a garbage clean up (which I took part in), occasionally dabbling in poster making, and speaking with interested bystanders who had questions about their motives or agenda as a tented resident of the square. His responses always reflected the need to care for the “new Egypt”; it’s people and governing with social justice as a top priority. It was great to have met with him again, this time at a café in a narrow street behind the square, to have some tea during the interview. Not sure of his experience with the term civil society, still I went ahead and asked for his opinions. Mo explained:

“Civil society is the heartbeat of the street. Not just the street, any organization or institution, or the nation, it’s also how we connect thought, and different beliefs of the society. Civil society should be close to all levels of society; all levels of society should find an equal balance within civil society.”

“Yes. I do consider myself as part of civil society. We need civil society to fix our court, our ministry of justice, because everything seems to still be unjust. We are never going to forget the Mubarak regime, because they destroyed civil society. We need to learn from Mubarak’s regime because they were very cruel to us and cruel to civil society and they destroyed it. Civil society vanished during the end of the Mubarak regime. They also refused any suggestions civil society might have had.”

Interestingly enough he does not seem to reference the NGO sector as a primary leader of civil society while asserting that the sector is “the heartbeat of the street.” Additionally, he makes a statement that no one else had mentioned before during my research, that civil

society should be a part of all levels of society. This is a profound statement for two reasons: firstly, that civil society, the one we most often come to hear about, is not connected to all levels of society as Mo makes the point that it should be. Secondly, he references “levels” of society, rather than considering the sector to be an all encompassing space lying between the “state and the family.” An emphasis should be made on these levels of the state, in a reference to James Ferguson; much of African civil society is not on the grassroots or bottom level, as many believe, leaving it to be dominated by transnational organizations, and government. While NGOs and formal CSOs are explicit in their active involvement with urban and rural poor communities, it is clear that Montasser does not see the same civil society I have become accustomed with and is valued by much of academic community, as well as foreign and local governments.

Next I was fortunate enough to meet an incredibly active young woman, Maha, at the headquarters of a small liberal political party called the Revolutionary Ghad. It was relatively quiet with only a few men acting as security while they sipped tea and conversed. With a great smile and a charming personality, her political will appears unbroken and more willing than ever to swallow challenges that surely will lay ahead of them, no thanks to the government. As a leading activist, she bravely campaigns for expanding women’s rights in a time where there is a conservative counterattack in favor of patriarchal principles. Stones and other hard, oddly shaped materials have been thrown towards their marches, as a thin row of men take the blows by surrounding decently sized crowds of fed up women who chant in unison for their equal individual rights. And yet they continue to organize rallies and courageously march throughout downtown Cairo.

This is what she said when I asked her what she believed to be civil society and whether she was a part of that:

“Civil society needs to serve the people, all kinds of people, in jail or outside jail, unemployed or employed, educated or uneducated. I try to work with civil society, as much as I can, helping, calling, receiving calls, doing what I consider are my duties. Anyone who is willing to give up his effort is part of civil society, and I am willing, I try to work in the streets as much as I can. I met a lot of people that went to jail, got tortured, I’ve tried to help them as much as I can with whatever is in my reach. I am part of civil society in a direct and indirect way. What I try to do is transport the voice of the people from the streets to wherever the media, or wherever it needs to go.”

With her eyes filling with tears, you could feel her passion and love for the people she serves was interminable. She speaks of an energetic civil society where one volunteers their time to either help the less fortunate or as she said, “making calls, receiving calls” and to help in any way possible when it comes to the plights of the street. She also explains that she has a role to transport the voice of the street to those who are listening, this does not sound like one civil society where democracy thrives and all voices are heard. It sounds as if the voice of the people is almost separate from the formally functioning, more recognizable, supposed civil society- which is actually supposed to be the location for the opinions, voices, and debates of the so called heartbeat of the street. All and All you wonder to yourself where are CSOs in all of this, where is their work in empowering those in the street or the majority of people when the people themselves are seemingly doing what they can on their own and with limited resources?

Next, I met with a young woman named Sally who I met through my interview with Relief International. Sally is what you may call a woman of many trades, a student, dentist, activist, and a leader of several informal organizations known as ‘initiatives.’ Together with many individuals and groups she met in her hometown of Alexandria

during the revolution, she co-founded what were once small gatherings of volunteers that have since become a few thousand strong youth force to reckon with. These initiatives were put together with the intention of doing “good” for the Egyptian people, especially for civic engagement, without the legal red tape that is obligatory when an organization or NGO is started. Instead these young adults bypass the legal process and only have to find locations, such as auditoriums, which may hold these large groups of volunteers. Here the magic happens. They create ideas, focus groups, hold workshops and motivate their members to become leaders for the issues they individually care about. Whatever work they do, it’s done in a creative and innovative manner, they need little funding and are able to sustain their work by members volunteering a few hours a week of their time to do their part. Sally said something to me during the interview that will always stick with me, “it should never be difficult to make positive change in your community.” She said this with a hint of frustration quickly masked by her upbeat and positive personality. I went ahead and asked her the important question, what did she think was Egyptian civil society?

“It is more or less an organization that stimulates social change, but not military, not governmental. This a huge difference, the difference between charity and development, because the majority who do charity say they are doing development, but no, doing charity or relief is not really development, it is immediate relief not long term relief.”

Sally makes the quick distinction between charity work, which dominates much of the local NGO scene in Egypt, and development organizations that have long-term goals for society. Her explicit discounting of charity organizations as civil society, it seems, was a direct attack on the hundreds of NGOs that consider them to be civil society, are also able to receive international funding, and that work without a sustainable model for society.

Charity is a short-term solution that does not bring to light the root of the primary problems associated with providing humanitarian relief to the needy. While it can be affective and millions in Egypt are in need of some kind of relief, the problems will continue to grow for the next generation if organizations do little to confront the root causes. Next, I asked her to describe what she is involved in and how it is connected or a part of Egyptian civil society:

“It works like any formal group, usually they start because of a charismatic person who leads or motivates people to join him or her, usually students or recently graduated to didn’t find work yet, and they don’t want to be committed full time to development work but at the same time they want to do something. The best solution is the initiative thing. The first initiative in Egypt was Adwar, in 2005, in Alexandria, it was the first one who announced themselves with a professional foundation, but without being a foundation. They have a really cool story: “you and I want to do something, but society doesn’t give us a chance, because of this, we everyone has to play a role, you get a role, I get a role, we all take a role.”

“Everyone plays their role. I think these are the civil society organizations, not necessarily the really established NGOs. Because for example, Adwar, the first initiative, produced the most now political activists that represent Alexandria and they work now in Cairo. So these initiatives maybe they are not really visible, but they develop a lot the capacity of their members. So, you really help their awareness, and building capacity, which I think is the aim of the other NGOs, but the other NGOs really work for their name. But these other people work for both individually and the name of the initiative.”

“We also do programs with juniors, from like 11 to 16. Because everyone are trying to develop the youth, but people already have their personalities formed already, but if you target a younger audience this can be better for the country. We try and show them how the real world goes but in a really simple way. I think Egyptian civil society is one of the strongest civil societies ever.”

“Another very good initiative is Open Space initiative. They promote using space in a creative way, for contemporary art, for political messages, street art, graffiti, street dance, flash mob etc. What’s great about initiatives is that they utilize ‘new’ and ‘creative’ techniques. Initiatives are definitely civil society.

Sally had zero doubt in her face when she said that Egyptian civil society is “one of the strongest civil societies ever” and that that initiatives are central to the sector. The work that they conduct constantly involves reaching out to the population and either building awareness or the capacity of their members. They all are considered leaders and they volunteer their time selflessly in order to make a positive contribution to their informal organization. The function and work conducted by these initiatives appear to be the grassroots actor that most academics cite as civil society, though without the credit, funding, or accolades. The members value education, being aware, increasing citizen activity, and the health of their home, Egypt. Yet they continue to work under the radar, out of sight from national government, and with minimal contact with transnational NGOs, because of their supposed “illegitimacy”.

Finally, I was able to reach another activist, a friend, and someone, who similar many others in this section, committed their lives to work for the good of society and the country. His background in human rights, non-violent action, and organizing led him to the forefront of the Kefaya and April 6th movement as well as playing an active and influential role in the uprising against the government. Because he was out of the country at the time of the interview, we proceeded to meet on the video chat “Skype” to discuss his opinions on civil society. However instead I asked him about whether he believed international NGOs are Egyptian civil society and whether they should continue to have an active supporting role. He responded by saying:

“We have to be very realistic, how could Egyptian civil society survive without donations, without donors, without funding. Most of them, at least the ones who do a good job, have no local source of funding. So the only way to receive any funding, or to get any training, or whatever, is to look outside, abroad, foreign organizations, international organizations and whether they are governmental

*and non-governmental, and whether they are civil. So in this case, it is a little bit complicated and we have to widen our perspective a little bit. This is a necessity, it is a symbiotic relationship, and without it they would die. **But do you consider them to be a part of Egyptian civil society?** If they are working to serve Egyptian people, in Egypt, then they are part of that civil society. If we look at an organization like, I don't know, Freedom House, it is funded by the U.S. But is it a governmental organization is it part of a ministry? No, it is not official. It is a civilian organization that deals with civil society in Egypt, so it is within the category."*

Here Ahmed lays out his justifications for international NGO work because of the fear that local, smaller organizations would lose funding, lack the necessary technical support, will ultimately lose their sustainability. While he brings up an important point, it seems to me that formal local organizations are at the helm of their international counterparts and essentially have to work towards the results, needs and agenda of the donor. Moreover, the point he makes clearly implies that many CSOs in Egypt are just barely getting by and will do what is necessary to receive funding in order to sustain their work and livelihoods. It is clear that the support given by transnational organizations is clearly appreciated and needed, however at what costs will civil society have to endure this relationship when the bottom line is that the primary reason civil society suffers is because of government, which just so happens to be a central counterpart of transnational organizations.

Here in this section we have highlighted the opinions and voices of distinct social forces of both civil society and the state. My research has led me to interviews with members from the local and international NGO community, foreign governments or affiliate organizations, activists, community youth organizers, the Mosque, Orthodox Church, and the Muslim Brotherhood to improve my understanding of what civil society organizations and individuals deem to be "Egyptian civil society". Using the voices of a

wide range of opinions has brought the opportunity to balance, compare, and juxtapose the relatively different variations of what civil society is in Egypt. The next section, using the same outlining process, I will present the same interviews in order to discuss and analyze opinions on government interaction and how their actions affect civil society.

Civil Society and Government: How close is too close?

- a. Level of Interaction with Government
 - i. International NGO's

This section analyzes to what extent there are government restrictions and on the type of relationship social forces of civil society have with political society. This section will also reveal whether organizations cannot accomplish work without government, cannot sustain without government, or are carrying out the work of government on the same hierarchical level of the state.

Lets begin again with the interview with CARE International's country director. About half way through I took some time to ask about and discuss CARE's interactions with government. First I asked him how his organization interacts with government.

“Well Local NGOs of course are different than international NGOs. We are much less highly regulated, much less highly controlled, so there is a real role for international NGOs here in Egypt to support local NGOs, and to be able to do things and say things on behalf of local NGOs that local NGOs wouldn't dare to sometimes say. And like I said, all local NGOs are given money by the ministry of social development... they all need to have any money that they receive from us, they need to have it approved in writing, even donations need to have approval, so they are quite tightly regulated, where is with us, we basically report to the ministry of social development which has an NGO branch to it. We are generally, fairly lightly regulated and we are supposed to give reports on a regular basis of what we are doing, but they don't have to be advanced reports. They can be like here in the last 6 months and show funding and how we are using it. The way the government can control us is by controlling the local partners. They don't care so

much about what we're doing they care a lot more about what local partners are doing."

On whether the interaction between CARE and government positively or negatively affects the services the organization provides:

"Yeah, government support is critical for us. That's kind of the third leg, local partners but also government. And we have a lot of success from local government. The real hard part is national government, in Egypt as in most cases, local government is much more responsive, much more understanding of needs on the ground, they're sometimes themselves impacted or their families are impacted by a lack of services. They are closer to the local community and feel more accountable to the community, so we have a lot of really strong local government ties, local ministry people, local governorate people, and that's where we put a lot of our efforts in, explaining what we are doing, presentations, getting their buy in... you know at the end of a project you want the government to have picked up the ideas, objectives, and you can't do that unless they share the ideas and objectives in the first place... so, government is definitely critical, but the tough one is national government."

In his response to the question around government interaction, he explains the difference between local and international state control and capabilities. It seems that government is more fearful of local NGOs, likely because their interests as an organization are different. Local NGOs, other than charities, who are the most capable of reaching a broader audience, have a difficult time organizing workshops on civic engagement, the constitution, governance, corruption, basically areas that are deemed a threat to the state's power. International NGOs on the other hand have an easier time implementing their work yet they certainly have trouble reaching the broader target audience, as they simply do not have an interest in challenging the local government with a politicized message. I wonder if these international organizations, that have working relationships with government, have thought of challenging the state's restrictions on local organizations? Would this empower local organizations and put international organizations out of work

if the local were able to function without persecution and suppression? Compelling thought. Furthermore, international NGOs seem to be put up on a pedestal, indicating that the state may have less power over transnational organizations as they often perform similar work that the state is responsible for. The following question was whether CARE's relationship with the government positively or negatively affects your relationship with other local NGOs. His response reflects a recurring theme of confusion as to what it is civil society can do in Egypt:

"Yeah, well Egypt has become a bit complicated of course. Under Mubarak, life was a lot simpler in many ways. I mean you knew the people who had been there for a long time, the policies were in place, everything was clear on what you could do what you couldn't do, both for us and local NGOs. Now, it is much more unclear, there is a new NGO law that has been going through parliament and now there is no parliament anymore... So what are the policies in terms of civil society? Nobody knows, what are the policies in terms of cooperating with foreign funded entities and all this business? Nobody knows, so it has become a lot more difficult."

Here it is clear that under Mubarak, there was indeed a status quo, an awareness of where one stood within the state as a civil society, and which boundaries could not be crossed. Also, this NGO worker is correct in his statement, it would have been a simpler system for the NGO sector, especially for INGOs, to not challenge the status-quo, to accept discriminatory policies, and to ultimately do some socio-economic 'good' while sustaining the organization's survival in an important international branch. There is a direct correlation to the transnational nature of this organization and the bilateral agreements made between government and supposed civil society leaders. CARE, as well as several INGOs, functions under an agreement with the government saying that they will work under a specific mandate with obvious restrictions. Ministries of the government regulate all funding to the NGO sector and CSOs, which requires all

exchanges of funds to be reported. If the government dislikes the use of funding, an organization's work will be halted and could cease to exist, particularly in the case of a local registered organization.

“Local partners see us as a bit of an umbrella to protect them. If they are getting funding from us, we'll often help them. If the ministry sees that ‘youth for development and environment’ in Minya, a local NGO, is getting money from CARE, and if they know CARE, which they do, they are more likely to say okay this looks fine, we'll sign off on it. If the NGO is getting money from Qatar, or some entity the ministry doesn't really know, there is going to be a lot more question, about where is the money coming from, why does it come here, what are you going to do with it, all this kind of stuff... so to some extent we have a symbiotic relationship with our local partners that we need them for local knowledge, local implementation, local constituency, and they need us for legitimacy, for training, capacity building, and they need us for lobbying and advocacy for the government. The other reason is their reach doesn't often extend nationally, there are very few NGOs in Egypt that work on the local level as well as the national level, and that is a big weakness here. And that is one of our niches we see with CARE, because we have 4 field offices, we have field staff, and so although the local partners do the work, still our field staff interacts a lot with local communities, partners, and so we get a lot of information about what is happening, what people want, what people need. For example in the water sector, if you read the statistics, officially it says 96 percent of Egyptians have access to household to water. Where is I can give you examples of many villages in Beni Suef, just 2 hours south of Cairo, where 40 percent of the households don't have a water tap. So you wouldn't know that unless you actually worked in Beni Suef, talked to local government, and then dug deeper and talked to local civil society, then actually went into households and things like that. It takes a lot of work to do that, so that is a big weakness in Egypt. You either have advocacy groups, at the national level, or you have these local implementers and there is not a strong link between the two.”

What must be said, in regards to the point that local partners use the influence of transnational organizations to protect and work as an “umbrella”, is that, although having protection from government is certainly a positive result of INGO influence, it also means that the government's influence within civil society grows through these relationships. INGOs certainly want to work with local organizations that are “compliant” and “legitimate” in the eyes of the government, especially in order to maintain their

working relationship with political society. Firstly, a “legitimate” local organization suggests that it is “registered” with the government and is authorized to work as a non-governmental organization. Secondly, to be registered requires an organization’s funding to come from either a government ministry, which is limited and allows government to control the funds and ultimately the work of NGOs, a local source which is limited, or an international source which is in many ways unlimited but highly regulated. The government is then aware of funding, who it is coming from and how it is being used, which allows for political society to maneuver against civil society and maintain the state dynamics of power- or status quo. Is this a positive result for local organizations? No, because their work as a civil society becomes more regulated, obviously less political, highly controlled by donors, and will maintain similar dynamics and hierarchical levels of power within the state. I believe the NGO sector will claim that they do what they can with the space provided, which is not a whole lot.

With my interview with Plan Egypt, the country director was less than enthusiastic when discussing their interaction with government as an INGO. I asked him firstly how his organization interacts with government, his response being:

“Well we have the ministry of social solidarity that supervises all NGOs, except for CARE; they have a special presidential decree. Anyway, we have to be supervised by the ministry of social solidarity, and the minister was confirmed to continue since the revolution, but the point is we used to have monthly meeting with the undersecretary of the minister of social solidarity, and I had my monthly meeting with the ministry as well. It’s actually okay, especially at the local level; there is a very good relationship that the Egyptian staff knows very well how to have a positive relationship with them. But then you have this security system, which are not actually the security people, but within social solidarity there are security guys who are in all the meetings, and approves or disapproves things. They have this idea that there is a potential of something political. On a personal side, what happens to any of us that go out, I can’t leave the city without being

‘followed’. Normally on field trips when our staff goes, well there is some strange guy and he’s the security guy.”

“Approval. There is a registration, and they have to have an approved board. Most CDAs have to have government functionaries on the board. And everything is yearly audited, and ours do because we are heavily supervised.”

Not surprisingly, his answer reflects the over-regulation and control that is discussed thoroughly by fellow CSOs. I asked him if his relationship with the government assists or makes the delivery of their services more difficult:

“Of course. But, it is a real unique sort of situation. The messiest democracy I worked in was Bangladesh, another big country, hugely populated, Muslim, where the government is really ineffective. So we could do a lot of stuff, but not very effectively with government institutions, it’s even hard to meet people in higher levels of government. So everything we do is pure civil society, tons of NGOs, the Mecca of NGOs. Here there are very few NGOs, international, compared to other countries because of all these restrictions. Actually I have seen opportunities, where there is a certain amount of stability in a dictatorship bureaucracy; there is not as much change and more stability. And we found opportunities to even talk to ministers, we just signed an agreement with the minister of youth, and the Muslim Brotherhood is going to take over that one. The dictatorship over all these years created this control system that is top-down controlled, so the bottom, even though it’s stable, it is totally unaccountable.”

Here the interviewee makes two important points. First, he reflects a need for stability for civil society, yet recognizes that the stability provided by a dictatorship is no agent for change, inevitably resulting in the ineffective development of society as a whole. Second, he describes the “top-down” system of control seen under Mubarak where the “bottom” is unaccounted. In this case then, where do INGOs stand in this vertical, “top-down” system if they carry out functions of government and arrange ministerial meetings while also representing a constituency that is at the “bottom” of this system? This question will be elaborated and discussed later.

The interview with Relief International inevitably led to my curiosity of what their interactions with government are like. Three of the four responded with a spirited debate on the extent of government registration for both local and international NGOs.

“R1: First of all, there are contacts between civil society and government- this is a must. For example, in order to start, you must have contact with the government.

R3: I guess you can register with different ministries; you can register with ministry of foreign affairs, also with the ministry of social affairs. Different International organizations register with different ministries.

R2: It is a requirement, for an international NGO, to register with both. We apply with the ministry of foreign affairs and then second we apply ministry of social affairs.

R3: It depends because I know some foundations applied with just one ministry so I think it has to do with status.

R2: CARE for example, and a few others are with the ministry of international cooperation, since the 50's, but all other organizations, registered INGOs, are registered through both ministries. We are waiting to be approved as an INGO, we are legally not working because we are not registered yet.

R3: Because we have submitted the papers, and they know of our submission, RI is working through formal compartments to implement a project- but we are technically not supposed to be working ourselves”

This debate not only reveals the complicated process and red tape necessary to cross in order to become a functioning and legitimate NGO in Egypt, but also that NGOs are meant to have a working relationship with their respective ministries- making any kind of political development a difficult and nearly impossible feat.

ii. Local NGO's

Next this section will present and discuss the responses of a couple local NGOs in regards to their interactions with government. Masr Al Kheir responds to my question by saying:

“There is a required reporting with the Ministry of Social Affairs, their policies govern us. For example if we need to do relations or cooperation with an international agency, we need to have the approval with the ministry of social affairs.” **What makes it easy or difficult to receive approval?**

“Well we have two phases, one before the revolution and one after the revolution. After, I guess it is not settled yet, we don’t know how easy it is or how hard it is to get approval, but before it was quite hard. You had to do a lot of work and it takes time. You have to get the approval from the security as well. Dealing with the government you cannot expect anything. There are no specific, clear rules.”

I then asked if their relationship with the government makes it difficult or assists them in providing services. One of the two responded by saying:

“The government makes it easy to provide services. If we want to work in Upper Egypt or in a village, you need the support of the governor or the mayor and the local people. So we meet them and we establish good relations with them and so they help us provide services and projects- they welcome us.”

Here the interviewees acknowledge the difficult and confusing relationship with government yet believe that they are necessary to collaborate with. They see this as necessary relationship because if they did not have the support of local or national government, then their projects would be undermined and ultimately fail. So what we are seeing is that government has become such an influential partner that CSOs want to receive support and praise from them- further developing a relationship of inferiority. It seems that successful development is not possible without government assistance or cooperation. Civil society members then become arms of the government and therefore become incapable of performing their functions as a CSO. In certain cases it seems

appropriate to withdraw supposed CSOs from civil society, as these organizations are not what they appear.

For the next local NGO, Education for Employment in Egypt, the government interaction is much of the same as is Masr Al Kheir. They deal with government only through the approval process, for instance for program funding. Farah responded to two of my questions surrounding government interaction by saying:

“We are a local organization and we are a part of a affiliate network, so there are EFE’s all over the region, and we have a sister organization in Europe. But what’s great about the organization is that each affiliates functions completely independently in accordance with the local governance. So our interaction is that we are registered with the Ministry of social solidarity, all NGOs have to be, all our funds have to be approved by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, but besides that, we don’t really work directly with governance- its more for approvals more than anything.”

And when I asked her if the government in any way affect the services they provide, she responded with, *“No. Not at all, the biggest thing is approval. But besides that, there is very little interaction. Because of the split within the ministry of social solidarity there is a lot of confusion because a lot of people don’t really know which ministry is handling what.”*

As an organization that specializes in education, the interaction with government is minimal and becomes less of a problem, as they are not a political threat. Most NGOs do not involve themselves in the political realm, out of fear or disinterest, and are made up of humanitarian organizations that provide charity, education and health services. Though they still must seek approval from government, NGO work is strongly encouraged to be apolitical and exist within the regulatory system, for the sake of national security.

iii. Foreign Government

Here the interaction between the national Egyptian government with a foreign government counterpart will be presented and discussed. In the case of USAID, who is

celebrating their fiftieth anniversary in Egypt, my interview with a staff member of the controversial Democracy and Governance sector will discuss their relationship with the national government. Firstly I asked him to discuss the interaction between USAID and Egyptian government:

“The vast majority of our money is actually in bilateral agreements that we would have with the ministry of justice to implement an automation system to improve the way the court systems function. Or with the ministry of local development we work on ways that we can put into effect a de-centralization law and roll that out, or with the ministry of health... you know, these kinds of things with different ministries. And we sign agreements with them, and some of them actually have a component where there’s going to be funding for local CSO’s out of that, like some complementary piece. So we call that our bilateral programs, and then we have unilateral programs that we’ve chosen to do on our own. So, this is where the controversy lays, but with all these bilateral programs we’re working extremely closely, I mean our staff on a daily or weekly basis are working hand in hand with government counterparts, and our implementing partners need to do the same.”

There are several interesting points to take from this response. Firstly, the majority of funds are distributed to bilateral agreements between various ministries of government. USAID works side by side, and therefore work on the same governmental level as the Egyptian government. They then involve CSOs, that they have approved, that can implement their projects. This makes it appear, to USAID, as if their funds are being transferred to “real” civil society organizations that are implementing government planned development project. Secondly, the rest of their funding goes towards unilateral agreements. Unilateral agreements imply the solo nature of this portion of their funding as they develop their own projects without government interference, meant for the Egyptian people, as if they were actually government themselves. USAID, in this instance, work “above” the state, and are carrying out functions of the state. The next

question I asked the USAID staff member to discuss was the approval process with government in order to carry out their funded projects:

“Well, umm, this is the controversial issue. The government of Egypt, well some people in the former regime were saying that we needed to actually receive their approval before doing anything. And our contention, especially after the revolution, was that we wanted to work directly with the people of Egypt. And we informed the government about the projects that we had this idea to do, the vast majority of our money is with bilateral programs and this was actually a relatively small portion of this overall gigantic assistance that we provide to the government of Egypt. But they weren’t comfortable with that foresight. We actually have laws that prevent us from having the host government veto our projects. So we have some legal restrictions on our end too, but of course any law 84 registered NGO has to of course, well first of all they have to have been registered, and secondly they need project approval from the ministry of social affairs.

About Naga, the Minister of International Cooperation, was in charge of our bilateral agreements, and so her contention was that we went outside this scope, of the bilateral agreements. So there have been exchanges back and forth but it has been controversial since 2005 but then we assumed that there had been a revolution and that some of the old rules wouldn’t apply, but I mean as we saw in this transition period, there is a lot of remnants. But I’m fairly optimistic with this new government at least up until a couple days ago (Protests at the US embassies in Libya, Egypt, Yemen, etc.), that there was going to be a lot more interest in collaborating with the United States government, as it had been under the interim regime. With IMF and these types of things, they are approaching us with concrete ideas and ways they want us to help their government to improve.”

The controversy he is referring was during and following the revolution, USAID was providing international and local NGOs with funding without the consent of the Egyptian government, although USAID felt it was within their guidelines of the unilateral agreements. In this case, it was the Egyptian government that felt threatened by the work of USAID and the fact that they had undermined the nation’s sovereignty. The controversy reveals both a differing agenda and the disappearing lines between the Egyptian government and it’s foreign government allies. The interviewee was heavily aware of the controversy, seemed to understand why it was controversial, and yet, they

will continue to collaborate and work side by side with the Egyptian government for the sake of their interests in the region. Moreover, his response made a few points clear in regards to the USAID relationship with Egypt, 1.the U.S. has laws that prevent and restrict the host government from vetoing an agreed project 2. USAID will only work with registered NGOs and these NGOs still are required to have project approval from the Ministry of Social Affairs, and 3. The newly elected government appears to have a higher interest, than the previous regime, in working and collaborating with the U.S.

government. These three points are not only controversial but ensures their support that the status quo from political society and civil society will continue as is. USAID has leverage over the Egyptian government and are then working above the state level, they will continue to associate and collaborate with NGOs that have little to zero political involvement, and because their relationship with the Egyptian government is improving- it appears they will continue to work as they have over the previous decades. The final question asked, out of curiosity, is whether the interactions with Egyptian government allow USAID's work to be more or less difficult.

"I think it's mixed, I think that in some ways working directly with civil society organizations is a faster way to deliver services, but, it can be less sustainable. Ideally, you want to be working with government counterparts whenever possible. Well actually ideally what you would be doing is you would be funding a bilateral program, and then you would have complimentary unilateral programs, that is if you want to work on anti-corruption, you want to collaborate with a state audit agency, you want to collaborate with the prosecutor general's office, if you want to collaborate with the ministry of justice, you know there are a whole bunch of government organs that are dealing with the officials state-side of this. But then you also want to be working for the demand side, you'd want to be working with grass-roots organizations that are putting pressure upwards on transparency, on asking for budgets to be made clear to everyone, so you want these programs and them to be putting pressure on members of parliament to advocate for changes. So ideally, from the perspective of a donor, you actually want to be working with both levels, and what you'd really want is the government officials to buy in to the

fact that if they get on the local level, advocacy for change, that this could actually help them. And this is a much easier sell in principle; it's a much easier sell with the new government. Because with the new government you say look you want to implement new policies, these are organizations that can help to do that. I was at a session the day before yesterday with the member of the high election commission and he was saying we have to collaborate with CSO's because they can do a much more effective job of civic education, voter education, they're in these communities, they can get up and help register people, I mean it is remarkable to have a government official say that. I think it depends on the individual and it depends on the ministry or whatever. But I think there is recognition that, like in any place around the world, that there is a role to be played by CSOs."

Here, the result is evident- that working with government is the preferred venue for USAID and is obviously beneficial for the host government, hardly surprising. He believes civil society organizations to have a less sustainable affect, however is this not due to government regulation? Furthermore, in reference to a previous discussion that civil society is supported and championed through policy, it is clear that they want to "support civil society", they want to work with grassroots organizations and that they allocate funds for this purpose. However, it has become clear that there is more interest in supporting a civil society that does not carry out the functions of civil society- for instance putting pressure on government over various domestic issues- than supporting organizations that will challenge the dynamics of power within the state. They do not actually put pressure on the authoritarian government to respect rights, tackle corruption, and decrease political society dominance in order to grow and expand space for civil society actors to function in a manner that will develop society as a whole. This is made evident on their website for USAID Egypt as they explain on their history page that they are proudly involved in the development of the economy, health, and education services, rather than developing governance and challenging human rights abuses by the state.

Next, I asked one of the development contractors to discuss their affiliation with the Egyptian government, if any at all. The interviewee, Pete, responded saying:

“Most of the USAID projects I have worked on have all been working with government counterparts, other ministries. And US Wheat deals with for the most part, the government and private millers and bakers. But as far as their direction on what they can and cannot do, they advise the government on regulations and they speak to the government for the most part for whom they can talk to and how they can go about things. Almost every project I have worked on has done their work through the government, or a government counterpart. Because you have defined goals, you have agreed to a contract with defined goals with USAID, and USAID has agreed with the Egyptian government what’s going to happen. So you have to deal with the government no matter what they say, they can say no we no longer want this or we are going to shift gears and change directions. You have to deal with the government in order to get anything done. Politics and economics are both an ends to each other... I think.”

Pete explains the deep relationship between government and USAID and how almost all of the projects he has been involved with are worked out with government. There is a deep relationship between development and government in Egypt although USAID continues to fund what they believe to be civil society. The bottom line is that development contractors for USAID and any government entity such as USAID work on a state level, in some cases even above the state, and at the same time promote civil society which hopes to scale back government. He then proceeded to respond to several of my questions regarding development in Egypt and the agendas of various external forces (the West, the Islamic bloc, and transnational organizations):

“Well let me put it this way: there are western goals and there are more Islamic goals. That’s the divide right there. Within the western goals they can pretend or think that they are all doing something different, but that’s not the way its viewed by the Ikhwan or the Islamic side. Pumping money in for tourism, or for whatever it may be, is viewed as something political and they are going to try and own whatever happens here. But for example, a company like CARE and a company like Cimonex would argue that they are doing two very different things. CARE would say they are doing it for the people, we’re a non-profit, we work in grass

roots. Cimonex would say well we are doing that too, but we do it for profit so we also take projects that do such and such but we do it in a little bit of a different way. But at the end, it's all Western influence here, the more money that the west can pump in will have an influence on the way the politics goes, and how society evolves here. And the more money that the Saudi's and Qatari's can pump in may support a counter measure to that. Is USAID money politically charged? Yes. I think each individual project is yes, it is meant to make Egypt more western. And it's meant to integrate Egypt into the global system, as we define it. But at the end of the day in Egypt, the Suez Canal, the fact that it has a border and a large army on that border, with Israel, are all more important than the actual development issue at hand. In general USAID is meant to stabilize Egypt, and bring it in to the Western world, so that Egypt doesn't attack Israel, doesn't close the Suez Canal, and keeps things favorable for the West. That's my belief. USAID, World Bank, EU, UN, these are all donors, and they all have different charters and different agendas, which we are seeing right now, because they're all trying to bring money to Egypt to stabilize it. They are trying to make sure Egypt does not go into a direction that will not deal with the West, or do something that the West doesn't like."

He then made several interesting points in an attempt to differentiate between

development workers and their backgrounds:

"Also you have to distinguish between Aid workers. There are people who truly believe in development and there are others who at some point in their career, decide that they could make more money, would like to see the world, by doing development work. For instance I worked in privatization projects and all those people, they were all ex-wall street millionaires that decided they wanted an easier life and they'd work for a couple years here and work for a couple years there, and they had a lot of advice to give on developing a capitalist market, developing the stock market, bond market, and all of that. They had advice to give, but they weren't doing it out of some love, maybe they were doing it out of pride where they helped develop the Egyptian stock market, but they weren't doing it out of some love or betterment of the Egyptian people. Forgive me for saying this but it's the same thing with USAID employees, when USAID says you are moving to another country, I don't think they care what happens to the Egyptian people, but at the end of the day, Americans look at it like it's their career, it's their job, and they're trying to do better for their family, and if they do good elsewhere, that's alright too."

Here, Pete provides a detailed description of the types of people that work on these

USAID, WB, IMF projects, and distinguishes between those who know about the region

and those who don't. Also, there are those that do development work in Egypt without

necessarily involving themselves within society as they provide prescriptions to government as an expert or consultant would.

iv. Activists and Initiatives

Finally, I present the research findings and opinions on the government interactions between various activists of “the street”. Interestingly enough, this is a limited discussion. The interviews discussed previously in this section involve civil society actors, or influential actors within the state that affect civil society, that either work closely with government or find themselves heavily restricted by them. Also, these interviews were with “formal” actors of society, meaning they are registered and monitored in some capacity by the government. For the following interviews, these members of ‘the street’ are just civilians and do not belong to formal entities, in fact their work is focused around what happens in the street as they play multiple roles for the sake of their communities.

For these activists interactions with political society are limited though significant. Their work is considered controversial because they advocate for issues that are political in nature and that publically critiques the work of government. They have shared experiences with government security forces having all witnessed and experienced brutality, have been arrested or detained, though these experiences were not discussed in depth. All three, similar to millions of Egyptians, have avoided working in a formal manner due to their disagreements with government and, beginning with the revolution, have increased their public involvement in the street. The public directs their causes as they organize and advocate openly for those issues, which includes their discrepancies with the role of government.

For another active member of the “street”, Sally, she is heavily involved in the organization of “initiatives” or informal groups of individuals who want to make a difference in society. These individuals nearly all met because of the revolution, the social movement that connected the majority of youth throughout the country. She co-founded an organization that has grown from single digits to nearly five thousand members, as they actively participate and organize youth workshops, in multiple governorates, that seek to empower, increase civic engagement, as well as spread awareness of individual rights. A main concern for them is location to meet, where is a safe place to organize when you know public organization will receive the attention of the authorities. So what they do is contact accredited NGOs that are willing to host their events and meetings, serving as an incubator or protective umbrella, in order to legitimize their gatherings. As a true member of civil society, Sally has her reasons for engaging committing herself with ‘initiatives’, citing the lack in government oversight for their success. I asked her, as an informal organization, how they are able to avoid government regulation that would surely damage their work, she replied by saying:

“Not only that we don’t accept money but also because most of our members are not full time free to help managing and directing. We have all of us involved in other work, traveling or something; we want something to be a lifestyle- to volunteer two hours per week at least. Instead of just sitting and doing nothing, we can sit together and do something.”

She responds by saying that they avoid government, firstly by not directly accepting funding, so in the case that they are in need of funds, they allow their incubator organization to accept on their behalf. Also, they are not tied down to any NGO, as they are willing and ready to move their meetings and events to anywhere else willing to host them without restrictions. Additionally, all the members are volunteers and

simultaneously maintain their careers in order to sustain their extra-curricular activities as an initiative. Then Sally said something that had a profound affect on me: “it should never be this difficult to do something positive for your community.” This statement correctly sums up the frustrations of millions of Egyptian youth that are interested and willing to work hard for the development of society but recognize the social and political roadblocks that discourage them to do so. These individuals are not the civil society members that reap the benefits of policy that supports civil society and are not recognized by government as legitimate. They are politically engaged, actively question government’s role in society, and they are not civil society actors that are empowered by an external power, they did it all on their own by promoting all members to be active leaders.

The activists discussed in this section are reminiscent of the grassroots CSOs that had always been used to describe CSOs in theory or principle. However, they are not the beneficiaries of support and because of their ‘informal’ status, are not technically considered to be a part of civil society, according to the national government, foreign governments, as well as by much of the NGO sector. There is something fundamentally wrong when genuine civil society actors are labeled as threats to national security, while supposed formal organizations receive funding and support for not actually playing their role as active and influential members of civil society. And for those organizations that do want to have an active role in putting pressure on government, they will receive the most regulation and the least support because their projects and funding will not receive government approval. This section reveals that activists, or members of “the street”, are politically engaged and at the same time have the least government interactions. They see

government as a road block to progress and will work with as many organizations or people as possible to affectively advocate their message to political society.

Thinking about the Vertical Topography of power: Introduction of the Civil Society Model

The earlier sections of analysis provided interviews and research outlined to reach a general consensus of what civil society is in Egypt and whether it provides the necessary social, political, and economic development that one comes to expect from the democratization process. Using the research results and narratives of social forces of the state, I will now present and discuss the necessary concerns with the recent thought and literature of the “state” and “civil society” using a vertical topography of power as well as why there must be a re-conceptualization of state-society relations. Following this discussion will be an introduction to a civil society model that provides an insight into civil society dynamics in Egypt.

James Ferguson’s piece, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* presents the African context and backdrop for the need of distinguishing the role of civil society within the state and the differences between theoretical interpretations and the way it is practiced in the “real world”. Recent academics in the realm of political science, anthropology, and other humanity studies utilize a vertical topography of power in order to understand state and civil society dynamics. This vertical topography of power, mentioned previously, describes and displays the power dynamics within the nation-state, implying that the “all-powerful and encompassing state” is at the top of the scale with the “family” as Ferguson puts it, on the bottom, with a sandwich layering of various institutions. The topography of power also vividly describes the appearance of a top-

down approach by the state as it intervenes with the “bottom”, the villages, the homes, and the family. This belief relies on civil society being the ‘in-between’ space within the state, below government and above the family. The neoliberal approach to “state and society” and movement for nation building and creating a world order that relies on the universal laws of man, citizenship, and state, is one of the factors for ushering in civil society. As Ferguson explains, “State-success, by contrast, means the construction of new bases of authority resting on nation-state citizenship. Above the national level, finally, appears the international, understood largely as (1) a source of “aid,” a helping hand in nation-building; and (2) a utopian image of the union of nation-states, with the key symbol of the United Nations as the promise of the universality of the nation form (cf. Malkki 1994).” A successful state can only be successful when and if the global community shows an endorsement, and this is made clear when a the nation that is in fact strengthening state capacity is, (1) prescribed by global institutions such as the UN, IMF, and World Bank, as well as (2) being a proud recipient of “aid” that will bring development and eventually bring any nation up to universal standards.

The nation building approach by the state itself, has, as Ferguson describes it, created this “new paradigm in the study of African politics in the 1980’s” that firstly, discovers the local base as a prime location for civil society, and secondly, that the “state” (with its economic, political, military, and societal suffocation and domination) is actually the main obstacle for democratization and development. The state has since been recognized as an obstacle for change, or an entity too big to change the lives of the local. The local is now perceived as no longer incapable, as tribal, backward, (or whatever typical colonial rhetoric that demonizes the “other”) and whatever tribal tendencies the

local population were committed to then are now understood as community organizing, grass root organizations, as opposition, as the new class of civil society set to tango with the state for more space and eventually for increases in societal progress- Ferguson exclaims, “For the state-and-society paradigm sees development not as the project of a developmentalist state, but as a societal process that is held back by the stifling hold of the state” (Ferguson, 2007: 97). While it seems that the state is in fact a major obstacle for democratization and development, the misconception of civil society representing ‘the local’, opposition, or grassroots organizations must be elaborated on. Civil society has become a major recipient of foreign “aid” as it is constructed to appear to be something that it is not. In Africa’s post-colonial context, the African state re-admits former colonial powers into the state as development advisors, diplomatic professionals, and the role models of civility.

I will proceed by making a few points regarding the controversial nature of the vertical topography of power in the “developing” nation context of Egypt. Firstly, it implies that the state (government) is an all-encompassing force that rules from above and holds ultimate power. This is not the case when there is a heavy presence of foreign government development agencies, WB, IMF, as well as the plethora of INGOs. Secondly, it is implied that the “Bottom” is made up of grass-roots organizations, which represent the local and should be empowered to challenge state hegemony and hold governance accountable. Thirdly, the vertical topography of power states that everything in between the state and the family is civil society- the place where state and people can meet, discuss, and initiate action. There has to be a distinction and differentiation between the “sandwiched” space between the “top” and “bottom” as my research has

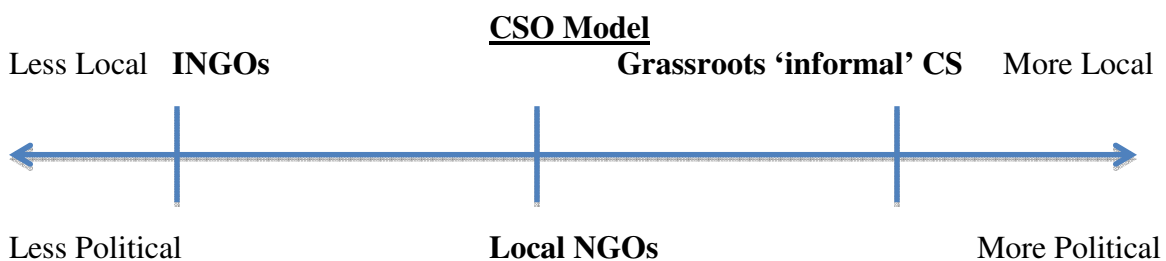
shown, civil society is not simply one area of democratic space. There are levels of the supposed civil society sector that signify major disconnections between CSOs. For instance, transnational organizations have bilateral agreements with government and therefore work side by side with the state. This counters the assumption that the state was on the “top”, when in fact transnational organizations and foreign governments either work on the same level of the state, carrying out similar if not the same functions as government, and in some cases work above the state. In a complete contrast, there are grassroots organizations that are not registered, are not legal, are not considered civil society (at least when it comes to policy and funding) yet work to advocate and promote individual rights while holding government accountable. Rather than an existing space where these levels can associate and work together, the space is divided, with clear distinctions of “level of power”. What I am suggesting is that 1.) The vertical topography of power does not indicate various levels of power- including showing that supposed CSOs work on the same level as the state, as Ferguson suggested, and that the topography of power should include a ladder- indicating rungs of power. 2.) Just as Ferguson proclaimed, verticality should be transformed into a horizontal topography that more precisely presents the “real” power dynamics of the state.

Transforming the vertical topography of power into a “horizontal ladder” is necessary for showing the various levels of power between the “state” and the “family” as well as presenting the argument that transnational and government organizations work on the same level as the “state”. The rungs of the ladder indicate the levels within civil society, showing a lack of connection between civil society actors and grassroots

organizations, while showing the closeness between certain civil society actors and government.

What this analysis and “horizontal ladder” ultimately provides and indicates is research that is consistent with several major discrepancies of Egyptian civil society. When it comes to INGOs they are confused as to whether they are a part of civil society while some claim they are very much a part of the sector. They are funded by foreign governments and work only with legitimate local NGOs that are government approved and regulated, disconnecting them from much of civil society. Foreign government entities and their affiliates are directed and funded by a foreign government agenda that wants to exert influence over the country. They work with INGOs, government, legitimate local NGOs and private industry, basically strengthening political society with socio-economic aid. They work close enough to the state level that, besides differences in nationality, you could hardly distinguish who is who. There are local NGOs that receive funding from local and foreign government, are highly regulated, and mostly intervene within the socio-economic realm while paying little attention to political development. These organizations are sustained by USAID and other foreign funding as long as there are shared interests over a developmental issue. These dominating forces either claim to be civil society or claim to empower the sector, although interestingly, none of the previously mentioned forces work for political development nor do they engage with broader civil society forces to hold government accountable and apply pressure (trade unions, grassroots organizations, advocacy groups, activists, initiatives). This leaves us with the activists, the ‘street’, and leaders of initiatives who all receive little to zero funding internally or externally. They have little to zero contact with INGOs or USAID

while their contact with local NGOs is limited, mostly because local NGOs deal with short term economic issues such as charity and do not involve themselves in the political realm. This group includes what may appear to be the civil society seen so often in contemporary literature. They are politically active and engaged individuals, they advocate for issues that are central to average Egyptians and they willingly challenge the state and their security forces. However, these groups of active citizens are not formally considered civil society and therefore are not the beneficiaries of the millions of dollars that is committed to civil society by transnational organizations and foreign governments.



The model indicates several aspects concerning civil society actors. Firstly, there is a trend that shows that the more an individual or group of civil society is political the more local they happen to be. As civil society actors become less local there is an

inclination to be less political and therefore not fulfilling the necessary functions of civil society in theory. Foreign government donors who provide socio-economic aid do not involve themselves within “national politics” and therefore do not promote political development; they are at the same time the least political and the most international. International and local NGOs are similarly limited in their political nature however they obviously differ when it comes to their origins, one is less local and the other more local. Initiatives, activists, the “street” happens to be the most political and the most local, giving way to the idea that grassroots organizations are the most “local” and “indigenous” while having the most interest in challenging state hegemony. What can also be included in this diagram is the revolutionary social movement that led to the ousting of former President Mubarak. They represent a large bloc of the “local” that is the most politically engaged and interested in challenging governance.

The results of this model and research show that the formal space for civil society is a completely dried up arena with little political activity (the hallmark of civil society actors). Formal local or international organizations will not rock the boat, will do limit government questioning because they work often work side by side with them, ensuring limited political activity. They have limited interaction with active organizations, and are more or less perpetuating the status quo and allowing the same power structure of authoritarian rule. However, underneath the dried up arena of “formal” civil society, which offers little hope for challenging the “political”, there lays a vibrant, active, and fertile arena for CSO’s on the “ground” that listen to the heartbeat of the street. This civil society is either ignored by the state and by the majority of the “formal” arena or seen as a threat to state hegemony.

Political Cartoons: Post-
Revolution



Ex President Mubarak (right) and ex Field Marshall Tantawi (left)

Tantawi says, "Why don't you leave already?"

Mubarak says, "Why just me?"

December 26, 2011

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm



"They took Aldo (police) and brought Shaheen (army)"

Note the one hand with the police and two hands bringing the army.
This is in reference to the supposed 'external', foreign hand that the government claims to have been involved in the revolution.

December 26, 2011

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

"Oh gosh, I forgot the name of the guy I came to vote for"

In reference to lack of education and individuals that were paid to vote during elections

May 16, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al



Youm



The Martyrs (angels) of the January 25th revolution speaking with the

Martyrs from clashes on Mohamed Mahmoud Street

“Ha ha you look new, I feel bad. Who’s going to get you your rights? They haven’t brought our rights (truth) yet”

December 26, 2011

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

Ministry of Interior asks for return of the emergency law

Monster is Emergency Law
Zookeeper (army) says, “Look at this refined animal, aren’t you embarrassed from being so harsh on him?”

September 3, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm



Headline: After Morsi’s latest decisions

Security says, “He’s telling you go and buy him new suits because the old ones don’t fit him anymore”

In reference to President Morsi’s transformation being in a position of power- Morsi is flexing

August 14, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm



Man flips coin for Egypt's future, "heads or tails (religious or civil)"

Man catches the coin with the face of the army on it: "I should have predicted the results on my own"

May 17, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

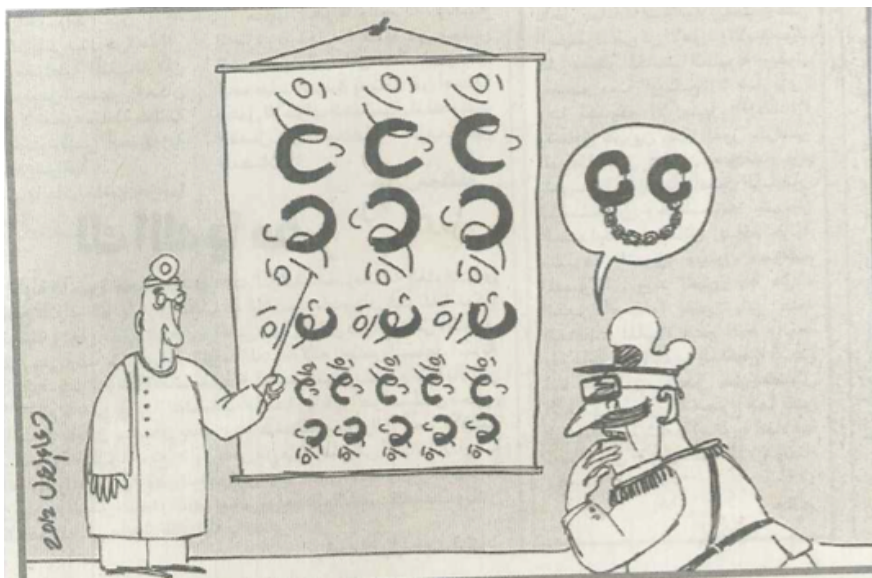
Law written to reconcile with investors was amended

Rich businessmen walk out of jail with their money and say bye to military (in reference to deals made with them)

Rich man flips a coin to the poor man, "here, splurge on yourself"

May 17, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm



Army general checking his eye sight

Letters spell 'revolution'

Army general does not see 'revolution' and only sees handcuffs

June 7, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

◆ نائبة بـ "السريع" تطالب بإلغاء «قانون التحرش»◆

A women in parliament is asking to cancel the law against harassment

Women hold sign that says, "No to harassment of women, whether alive or dead (in reference to the proposed law to allow men to sleep with their wives within eight hours of their death)"

One woman asks, "She doesn't have sisters?"

May 17, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

هي معندهاش .. اخوات بنات؟!!

لا للتحرش بالنساء.. الأحياء منهم والأصوات!!

ما تنتخبوا بقي و تخلصونا ... الطبخة واقفة على الزيت والرز و أنبوبة البوتجاز!!

"Go ahead and vote, finish this already. The meal is waiting for the oil, the rice, and the gas tank"

In reference to the necessity for a president as there continues to be limited supplies for staple products

May 17, 2012

Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

Four papers read: 1) Morsi the Brave, 2) Morsi who embarrassed Iran, 3) Morsi is inspired by God, 4) Raise your head high, you are Morsi! (In reference to the well-known chant: Raise your heads high, you are Masry (Egyptian))

Man in the middle proclaims, “I know we are not an Industrial nation, but our line of production of pharaohs is going very well”



September 3, 2012
Private daily newspaper: Al-Shorouk

Morsi before his presidency:
“There is no pencil that will lose it’s lead in my era”

Morsi tells the beaten man: “the most important thing is that the pencil is ok?”

August 14, 2012
Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm

Police officer says, “you stole laundry and you want to get out for free, why? Do you think you are the killer of the demonstrators?”

In reference of the acquittals for police officers responsible for the death of protesters

June 7, 2012 Private daily newspaper: Al Masry Al Youm



Discussion:

In this section I make the necessary connections between the literature and research in order to discuss the results as well as their implications on both civil society literature, civil society under authoritarian rule and specifically Egyptian civil society. It is important to gather all of these thoughts, the literature, and research to discuss the recurring themes of this complex sector.

What does the literature show?

The literature provides a necessary background for the principles, purpose and role of the state and civil society. Without reviewing the classical definitions and interpretations of the state and civil society, let's first discuss the transformation of state and civil society from the "nation-building" to the "state-society" paradigm. The "nation-building" process understands the state as being the ultimate constructor of the modern nation state. The "state" is seen as a modern, highly rational, system of territorial organization while "society" is backwards, unorganized, and incapable. The "state" on the national level is a centralized authority that rules its citizens within the state, emphasizing the importance of requiring citizenship throughout society. The "state" is an enabler of democracy and can develop their nation with the help of aid from the international community. In the state-society paradigm the roles are reversed. The image now depicts the "state" as backwards, unorganized, and incapable of providing the space for society to flourish and ultimately develop the nation. "Society" on the other hand is seen as a place for investment or new possibilities because of the overbearing rule of the state in the socio-economic and political spheres. The "local", once understood as backward and rural, are now seen as enablers, dynamic, and held back by "state" power.

It is at this point where civil society officially becomes relevant, as a “buzz” word, for describing various social movements and the societal struggle against authoritarian regimes towards the end of the Cold War era. Civil society has since become nearly synonymous with “democracy” and has taken on the role of being an enabler for democratic principles.

The previous decades show that the Western academic world is certainly content with the simplistic understanding that civil society is solely a voluntary, grassroots, and dynamic sector of society that is needed to challenge and apply pressure on the state. Research has since been dedicated towards the work of civic organizations with the rise in social movements proving that the state needed to be rolled back. In terms of funding with “development” and “aid”, these dynamics have also changed along with the evolution of state and civil society. “Development” is seen in both paradigms, going from being the project of the state to a natural social process that is actually thwarted by the overbearing rule of the state. The belief that the state disables development along with the growing support for civil society by academia and transnational organizations (UN, WB, and IMF) is made evident by the creation of pro-civil society policies and the allocation of funds towards these policies. Development has now become an industry, made up of a network of international non-governmental organizations, transnational organizations and corporations that work to implement development projects in nations willing to undergo the neoliberal process (structural adjustment programs). Civil society has since become a major focal point for development agencies and is generally the target audience for the industry to fund and ultimately empower. Civil society has been funded and supported for years in nations worldwide, using the key terms of civic engagement and NGO

capacity building, and it is clearly seen as a key to democratization and applying pressure on the state. However, how close is civil society in reality to the civil society that is so actively discussed and written about in Western academia and government policy?

The following section will highlight and discuss the research findings for my questioning of Egyptian civil society in an attempt to provide the reality of state-society relations for Egypt and other authoritarian states in the “developing” world.

What did the research find?

Research consisted of interviews conducted with the major social forces of society. These social forces were namely, local NGOs, international NGOs, USAID and development contractors, as well as activists that work on the “street” level. The interview process consisted of several questions regarding civil society, with a few key questions wondering what each interviewee thought of civil society in Egypt, their definition, and their organization’s interaction with government. While civil society is often understood as a dynamic network of grassroots, voluntary, actors only the activists and their informal organizations function as the civil society as we have come to understand. My research has therefore concluded that civil society in Egypt is not what it seems in Western academia and government policy.

Local NGOs are heavily regulated by government and therefore are mostly involved in the socio-economic sphere, avoiding the political realm altogether in fear of receiving negative attention from government. Their attention is focused on health, educational services, and charity, mostly in the form of short-term humanitarian aid. These organizations receive funding from both government and foreign aid sources in the form of transnational organizations and foreign government aid. Not only are all funds

regulated and accounted for, projects are also subject to regulation and therefore have to compliment the agenda of both national government and other donors. Still, not all local NGOs are lucky enough to receive enough funding to sustain themselves and ultimately are forced to alter their work according to the agendas of donors or, they cease to exist. These organizations are at the helm of government and are unable to inspire long-term development that can roll government back.

International NGOs are not subjected to quite as much government control although funding and development projects are still regulated. Their work is also focused in the socio-economic sphere although projects may indirectly affect their constituent's political development. INGOs work closely with certain local NGOs however the local organizations must be legitimate according to the government and therefore are heavily regulated. The government must approve of projects and funding as well as which local organizations are involved. Some of the interviewees believed INGOs to be a part of Egyptian civil society while others believed they were catalysts for civil society; certainly there was an overall confusion. INGOs work with a long-term development agenda but ultimately are forced to work within the limitations of government. Both local and international NGOs work outside the political realm and are unable to create enough space for civil society to have a broad effect on society, no thanks to government control.

USAID and development contractors, who clearly are not members of Egyptian civil society still fund CSO's and have an effect on Egyptian society. USAID is American foreign aid paid to developing nations by American taxpayers and brought to national governments and organizations by way of the State Department. Millions of dollars are allocated for civil society in Egypt as the U.S. government hopes to support

democratization in the Arab Republic. However, funding is either delivered to the Egyptian government who therefore can decide which organizations to provide funds, or, to INGOs that will ultimately utilize funding for their project partnerships with local NGOs. In both scenarios funding is provided to organizations that are highly regulated, that will not use the funds for challenging governance, and that are seen as legitimate by government. Additionally, USAID projects are bilateral nearly seventy percent of the time, as they work hand in hand with the Egyptian government. The U.S. ultimately is interested in Egypt's stability as their interests in the region depend on it. Stability in Egypt means supporting organizations that will rarely or never question governance or the status quo.

Activists on the other hand serve a much different purpose than the previously mentioned forces of society. Of the four individuals that were interviewed, all of them are involved in informal organizations, work voluntarily, occasionally involve themselves with local NGOs but are weary of their capabilities, have limited to zero contact with INGOs or foreign governmental aid, and consider themselves to be affiliated with social justice issues focused on improving governance. One woman is involved in an informal organization called an "initiative" that voluntarily brings together young leaders with likeminded beliefs who want to develop society's awareness and activity but specifically want to avoid government controlled NGOs and development agencies. Even receiving funding from abroad, whether it be from USAID, the EU, or Qatar, is looked down upon for fear that their image will be tainted in the eyes of the people. Most of these individuals met during the Egyptian Revolution on January 25th 2011 and believe the government to be a roadblock to their efforts. The work these individuals take part in is

“pure civil society”, the definition seen in contemporary literature, which is a grassroots effort to rally and organize large numbers of the population to put pressure and challenge government’s overbearing authority.

What the results prove is that there is a dominant, formal, public, official, and legitimized civil society that is promoted by transnational organizations, a dense network of INGOs, Western academics and government policy, that has turned out to be the opposite purpose of what civil society should strive for. This civil society is not the dynamic, bustling, innovative and grass root sector of society that will push forward efforts for democratization in Egypt. This civil society is regulated by an authoritarian regime, often works closely with government, and still receives millions of dollars specifically geared towards various elements of democratization. Using the funds of external governments and affiliate transnational organizations like the WB and IMF, this public imposter we know as civil society cooperates with the national government of Egypt to impose Western development and neoliberal policies. While this paper does not specifically question the intentions of the neoliberal agenda, it is astonishing that the Egyptian government pre and post revolution comfortably receives funding though there is no indication that governance has improved domestically. In fact, the country has slowly worsened due to the lethal combination of structural adjustment programs and unemployment that culminated with an uprising that dethroned the former president in 2011. With the current President Morsi the same domestic problems linger and yet there seems to lack the necessary inner questioning by transnational organizations of their own funding and appear willing to continue the same development practices as was agreed with the previous regime.

The research also proves is that there is an underground, informal civil society that is dynamic, organized, and grassroots, similar to the civil society described by academics and government policy. It turns out that informal civil society is not weak, small or incapable, only weakened by the fact that they are not legitimate due to the nature of their work and therefore receive little in funding or support from national or foreign governments. Furthermore, they are considered by government sympathizers to be “the opposition”, the “tyrants of the revolution” the backwards “other” that is destabilizing the nation. With all of this applied pressure, the proof of their strength is clearly evident by the results of the revolution, with turnouts of over a million strong, the use of well-practiced nonviolent tactics against an armed and equipped security force and the current mobilizing activity on the ground against the new Morsi regime.

The research is consistent with the domestic issues that have plagued the Arab Republic over the past decades. There has been a visible “public” civil society promoting policies that were government regulated within the same timeframe that have not resulted in democratizing the state, in fact, the military dictatorship had been hardly impenetrable up until the uprising that saw millions of Egyptians call for an end to despotic, aristocratic rule. “Informal” civil society instead decided to take development into their hands, as the revolution may be the greatest attempt at a social and political revolution in modern Egyptian history, without the help of ‘formal’ civil society.

Implications:

What are the implications of these state dynamics for the African and Middle Eastern context? What first must be recognized is the disparity between civil society in the “developing” world in comparison with the “developed”.

Funding should not be guaranteed to authoritarian governments with little interest in real democracy. These funds actually strengthen “formal” civil society, which ultimately acts to strengthen stability in government rather than alter their deeply flawed mode of governance. Leakages of aid facilitate corruption, allowing government to support and allocate funds to whichever organization they approve all the while the power dynamics, status quo, and the state’s involvement continues as it always had been. Continued support towards “formal” civil society simultaneously strengthens government while weakening “informal” civil society. Civil society in “developing” nations becomes a tool for both external and internal manipulation. It is a tool for the state as they can regulate “change” for Egypt, ensure political power remains stable and create the appearance of “development” by allowing NGOs to exist but with heavy regulations and control over their work and effectiveness. All at the same time promoting “democratization” by allowing transnational organizations and Western government to play a major role within its development process. It is utilized by external forces (transnational organizations and international government) because Egypt becomes westernized, can shape and remodel the nation according to neo-liberal policies, can bring Egypt into a global economy, can ensure western interests are intact, and allows a certain degree of control over the state. All at the same time promoting democracy and socio-economic development though not questioning governance, creating space for “informal” civil society, or applying pressure for real, tangible political development.

“Informal” CSOs continue to grow where civil society is the purest, in the street. The Egyptian street, commonly regarded as the bustling birthplace for the revolution, is the site of where every day trials and tribulations are most evident. The street is where

acquaintances become friends, for transactions to be made, and where the majority of the population spends its time struggling to survive. Nevertheless, “informal” civil society has a lot of intended and unintended enemies, none more daunting than the government apparatus. This sector applies pressure nearly daily, as there are protests and campaigns that are organized in public squares with the intention of creating awareness and promoting democratic principles through an outreach method unparalleled by ‘formal’ CSOs.

The dynamics of power within the state should be more closely scrutinized as civil society continues to be misinterpreted by its leading promoters. “Formal” civil society may be capable of re-writing their fate by developing new methods of outreach to informal CSOs in an attempt to further their understanding of society. If their government counterparts do not approve, then the necessary job of holding the Egyptian national government accountable for not allowing the seeds of democracy to grow will be addressed on a state level. If government does not approve and no longer appreciates the work of ‘formal’ civil society, then they can step aside for ‘informal’ civil society to regain this space and legitimately challenge the imperious rule of government. Either support “informal” CSOs, pure civil society, with the necessary funding or get out of their way and allow them to regain space from political society in the grassroots, dynamic manner it is supposed to serve and develop Egyptian society.

APPENDIX I:

(NGO Law 84, 2002 is not available online) Legal Analysis According to The International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL):

“Organizational Forms

Law 84 of 2002 allows for the creation of associations, foundations (i.e, non-governmental institutions), and unions. In addition, not-for-profit companies can be established by virtue of provisions in the Egyptian Civil Code and Corporate Code. According to Law 84 of 2002, an association is a “group with a formal structure continuing for a definite or indefinite period and formed by natural or juridical persons, or both together, whose number is not less than ten in all cases, for a purpose other than gaining physical profit.” (Article 1)

A foundation or non-governmental institution is established where a fund is designated for a definite or indefinite period of time, for the realization of a purpose other than profit. (Article 56)

[The remainder of this report will focus on associations, as the association is overwhelmingly the most common organizational form.]

Public Benefit Status

Associations pursuing “general interest” purposes may be recognized as “associations of public benefit” by presidential decree, upon the request of the association or of the government-controlled General Union for Associations and Non-Governmental Institutions (Foundations). (Articles 48, 49) The criteria for attaining public benefit status are not clearly defined and the President’s decision not clearly guided by objective standards. According to Article 49:

All association visualizing the realization of a general interest upon or after its foundation may be vested with the quality of public benefit, by decree of the President of the Republic, upon the request of the association, or of the administrative authority or the General Union for Associations and Non-Governmental Institutions, and the approval of the association in both cases.

According to Article 51 of Law 84 of 2002, public benefit organizations have access to direct government funding. In practice, many public benefit organizations have close political links to the ruling party or President.

Barriers to Entry

Law 84 of 2002 includes a number of legal barriers to the establishment of associations. First, the law requires that all associations be registered in order to operate; in other words, informal [unregistered] associations are prohibited. Second, the law includes vague grounds for denial of registration, thereby inviting subjective and arbitrary government decision-making. Registration can be refused if the association’s purposes “threaten the national unity” or run “against public order and public attitude.” As demonstrated recently, the Ministry has used these grounds to deny registration; the associations *Egyptians against Discrimination* and *Old Egyptians for Human Rights* were denied registration in January 2008 and May 2009, respectively. Third, many

international NGOs seeking to establish branch offices in Egypt have faced great difficulty in doing so.

Barriers to Operational Activity

Barriers to operational activity in Egypt take the form of governmental interference in internal affairs, vague grounds for dissolution, the imposition of harsh sanctions, and extra-legal harassment by security authorities.

First, Law 84 of 2002 expressly authorizes the Government to interfere in the internal affairs of associations. Specifically:

- The administrative authority has the right to call a General Assembly meeting (Article 25);
- The association must send a copy of the papers tabled before the General Assembly to the administrative authority at least 15 days before convening the Assembly (Article 26);
- The association must provide the administrative authority with a copy of the minutes of the General Assembly meeting within 30 days from the meeting (Article 26);
- The Minister of Social Affairs may appoint acting members of the Board of Directors where there are insufficient members to hold a meeting (Article 40);
- The Minister may also dissolve the board of directors if the board has not convened a meeting of the General Assembly for two consecutive years (Article 42).

Second, the law includes vague grounds for dissolution, thereby inviting subjective and arbitrary decision-making on dissolution decisions. Vague grounds include:

- Subscribing to or joining any club, organization, society or authority outside Egypt without first informing the administrative authority; and
- Threatening the national unity or public order or public attitude.

Third, Egyptian law makes harsh sanctions – including imprisonment – available for violations of the law. Conducting activities as an unregistered association, conducting activities that threaten the national unity, and receiving foreign funds without prior governmental approval are all examples of violations that could lead to the imposition of sanctions, including imprisonment.

Finally, the security apparatus in Egypt is infamous for interfering with associational activity.

Barriers to Speech / Advocacy

Egyptian law prohibits all “political activities” of NGOs. Regulations indicated that prohibited political activities include “advocating the program of one of the political parties, contributing to electoral campaigns, and putting forth candidates for office.” (Regulations to Law No. 84/2002 on Associations and Non-Governmental Institutions (Article 25)). The Egyptian Government, however, does not distinguish between a political campaign for office and public policy activities. One example is the case of the Egyptian Association Against Torture. The Administrative Judiciary Court refused to register the association on December 15, 2005 because the court decided that the group’s mission to pressure the government to eliminate torture in police stations and prisons was

“political activity”; consequently, the association was prohibited from launching its activities.

Criminal defamation is also used to silence critics of Egypt’s Government. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, one Egypt’s leading human rights and democracy activists, was arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned in 2000 for, among other things, allegedly “defaming Egypt’s image abroad” – a violation of the Egyptian Criminal Code. His defense team claimed that the real motive behind the Government’s prosecution was his outspoken criticism of President Hosni Mubarak and his administration. Mr. Ibrahim was tried three times but ultimately acquitted by the High Court of Justice in 2003 after substantial international pressure was exerted on the Mubarak regime. Several years later, a series of hisba lawsuits* were brought against Mr. Ibrahim by individual Egyptian citizens, and on August 2, 2008, an Egyptian court sentenced Ibrahim to two years imprisonment for again “defaming Egypt,” this time under the hisba doctrine. At least a dozen additional hisba cases remain pending against Mr. Ibrahim.

Barriers to International Contact

Egyptian law requires advance Ministry approval in order to join any organization or society headquartered outside of Egypt. Egyptian authorities may prevent individuals (including association representatives and civil society activists) from travelling outside Egypt to participate in international conferences and meetings. Authorities may also prevent representatives of international organizations from entering Egypt.

Barriers to Resources

Foreign Funding

Egyptian law prohibits any association from receiving foreign funds – whether from foreign individuals or from foreign authorities (including their representatives inside Egypt) – without advance approval from the Ministry of Social Solidarity. Securing ministerial approval may require a two-month wait during which time the Ministry reviews the request for approval. The failure to secure approval can lead to dissolution. For example, on April 27, 2009, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) received a dissolution decree, alleging that the EOHR received foreign funding without authorization; the dissolution order reportedly came soon after EOHR published its 2008 Annual Report, criticizing the Egyptian Government. It should be noted, however, that an Egyptian administrative court found in a prior case involving another association that dissolution of an organization based on receipt of foreign funds without prior approval is unconstitutional.

Sending funds from an Egyptian NGO to a natural or legal person abroad also requires advance approval from the Ministry of Social Solidarity, except for scientific and technical books, magazine, publications, and brochures. Law 84 applies the same sanctions for sending and receiving foreign funding without government approval.

Domestic Funding

The barriers against foreign funding also apply to some categories of domestic funding. Specifically, the law requires that associations seeking funds from Egyptian individuals also secure advance approval from the Ministry. Presumably, the failure to do so carries with it the same risk of dissolution.”

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Mahmoud Kalawi assisted with interview transcribing, facilitating interviews, and translating

Zena Sallam provided an ethnographic experience of her time in Tahrir Square during the 18-day uprising

Post-Revolution Political Cartoons from Shorouk, Al Masry al Youm Newspapers